

Shape Shifting Masculinities: Accounts of maleness in Indian man-to-animal transformation horror films

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Abstract. Unlike the werewolf myth, on which there is a significant corpus of takes in Hollywood cinema, Indian horror films abound in snake-, tiger- and gorilla-transformations. Most of these shape-shifting monsters represent aberrant subjectivities that set in motion a cycle of destruction and redemption within these narratives. This article will explore how the male body in Indian horror films acts as a site of different bodily discourses that permits a reading of socio-cultural crises within the societal framework. Although there are almost a dozen Indian horror films to date that deal with such shape-shifting monsters, this article will limit itself to studying one Hindi film *Jaani Dushman* (1979, dir. Raj Kumar Kohli) and one Telugu film *Punnami Naagu* (1980, dir. A. Rajasekhar). The following core questions will be explored: do these narratives challenge the constructions of hegemonic masculinity? What departures from normative masculinity, if such a thing exists at all, take place? How do these narratives use horror codes and conventions to map the emergence of different types of masculinities? How can these bodily discourses be correlated with various contemporary socio-political issues of India?

Animals in Indian cinema outside of the genre of horror films have largely been portrayed sympathetically: for example, the domesticated animal is lauded for its ability to perform human-like actions as well as serve as a loyal companion to its human counterparts. In fact, the animal world has been constantly telescoped through human emotions, i.e., the closer such an animal appears to exhibit idealised 'humane' virtues, the more it is lauded or valorised. In contrast, horror films differ substantially in the representation of such animal-human relationships. The subject of such films is usually a wild and/ or exotic animal that threatens the very existence of man. This bestial nature is used as a narrative technique to gesture to the transformation of the human being into something fearful and incomprehensible. Fear of animals lie in the human inability to understand their behavioural patterns, especially their aggression. This is harnessed for a particular effect in the horror genre. This article focusses on those human-to-animal horror films where the body of the male protagonist becomes the site of transformation into animality. Through an interpretive reading of select man-to-animal transformation horror films, this article proposes that the spectacle of horror produced through monstrous male bodies narrativises crises of masculinities. These

crises of masculinities in turn can be read as products of the socio-political climate of their times. There are almost a dozen Indian horror films to date starting from the Bangla *Hanabari* (Haunted House, 1952)¹ to the Hindi *Hisss* (Nagin: The Snake Woman, 2010) that deal with the theme of human-to-animal transformations. This study will focus on two man-to-animal films: *Jaani Dushman* (Beloved Enemy, 1979) and *Punnami Naagu* (Full Moon Snake, 1980). This article seeks to establish that while the monstrous body in *Jaani Dushman* can be read as a disguised critique of National Emergency in India (1975–7), the shape-shifting male body in *Punnami Naagu* can be read as a metaphor for the caste politics of the 1970s and 1980s Andhra Pradesh.

Man-to-animal transformation films

Unlike woman-to-animal transformation films, man-to-animal transformation films, quite predictably, focuses primarily on the predicament of the male protagonist who undergoes the metamorphosis. Such films narrativise the trials and tribulations that these male characters undergo to come to terms with changes in their bodies. Typically, the male body is culturally constructed as stable and not in constant flux, unlike the female body, which is subject to consistent change in the form of menstrual cycles, menopause, pregnancy, lactation and so on. The horror film in focusing on the male body in flux may be read as thus revealing the male body's culturally-prescribed narrative of stability to be of mythical, not objective status. This is not to say that such struggle fructifies into anything meaningful in the horror film as all the male protagonists eventually die. (And one must add, die dissatisfied). This is very different from how female protagonists of the snake-women films react to such metamorphoses. Right from the beginning of those films, they are shown to be entities who have already adapted themselves to their dual selves—that of the supernatural and human. As a result, whenever they transform into snakes, the process seems to be less painful and less self-conflicting than what their male counterparts undergo in man-to-animal transformation films. Also, the ending of films with snake-women is less tragic as everything either culminates in the fulfilment of the snake-woman's desires (usually the destruction of evil) as in *Nagina* (Snake Jewel, 1986) or *Hisss*. Or, in instances like that of *Nagin* (Female Snake, 1976) where the snake-woman dies partially unsuccessful in her revenge, she is repentant for her actions and reconciled to her fate (Dhusiya 2012, 112). But nowhere does one see them troubled about the uncontrollable changes in their bodies, whilst male characters always find themselves unable to reconcile the inevitable transformations their bodies must undergo in man-

¹ Though the film does not depict actual shape-shifting, the plot revolves around the villain wearing a gorilla bodysuit. In this sense, the film can be considered as a precursor to man-to-animal transformation films.

to-animal horror films. The male protagonist's inability to comprehend and assimilate these bodily changes can be read as its incapability to understand and thus withstand crises within masculinity. These horror films generate valuable insights about the pre-occupation of the male subject with his body, his masculinity, about choices between diverse formulations of masculinity around him, and his uneasiness at his repeated failures in achieving his desired notion of masculinity.

Studies on masculinities have gained rapid traction since the 1990s, particularly in the West, and it cannot be denied that sometimes models of masculinity developed in the West have become benchmarks for the rest of the world (Kimmel 2001, 22). The label 'masculinity' does not suggest any static framework of ideas and beliefs. Rather it is an evolutionary process where the 'masculine' subject constantly negotiates its own understanding of masculinities in relation to the world outside it (Kahn 2009, 190). In any given historical moment, this negotiation usually involves a reaction to or against the normative cultural exaltation of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1995, 81). This 'hegemonic' masculinity is not a stable, singular structure but a 'hybrid bloc' of diverse constituting processes that legitimise and reproduce patriarchy (Demetriou 2001, 337). While there is no ignoring the fact that global patterns of masculinity have played a vital role in influencing masculinities through the processes of colonialism, imperialism, post-colonialism and geopolitical struggles (Ouzgane, Morrell 2003), it is equally important to explore local indigenous patterns of masculinities (Pringle et al. 2011, 5). In the Indian context, it has been argued that the two dominant forms of masculinities thrive on two exactly-opposite principles: one is based on the Brahmanical ideas of control and detachment, and the other works on the principles of non-vegetarianism, sociability and providing for the family (Osella, Osella 2006, 50). Then, in certain special circumstances, like that of a prison where there is a forfeiture of human independence in a gendered set-up, a new set of competing and alternate masculinities other than the popularly-conceived ones develops (Bandyopadhyay 2006, 187). The purpose of this study is not to search for some elusive indigenous exclusivity of Indian masculinities as 'it is no longer possible to conceive of a pristine theoretical and cultural world of "non-Westernness", unmarked by a history of asymmetrical interactions' (Srivastava 2004, 27–8). Instead the focus is on the various socio-historical and economic processes that map the growth of the male protagonists in man-to-animal transformation horror films.

Jaani Dushman

The National Emergency imposed by the former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1975 was a watershed moment in the postcolonial history of India. The country witnessed the blatant violations of civil and political rights as the central government proceeded

with arbitrary arrests, censorship of the press, forced sterilisations and a witch-hunt launched against several judicial and police officials who were unwilling to participate in its mercenary tactics (Gupta 2012). The ruling establishment defended the drastic step citing external threats to national security and internal political instability created by the opposition parties (Palmer 1976, 100). The government utilised various audio-visual modes to propagate and legitimise the need for such an authoritarian regime (Rajagopal 2011, 1015). As a result, voices of dissent, apart from the opposition using the obvious political platform, remained scattered and unorganised only to appear later in the form of personal experiences, underground literature, prison memoirs etc. (Tarlo 2003, 32). Hindi films made during this period that critiqued the imposition of Emergency or fictionalised Indira Gandhi were either destroyed as in the case of *Kissa Kursi Ka* (Ahmed, 2009) or banned as was *Aandhi* (Storm, 1975) initially in 1975. However when closely studied, certain Hindi films made during that period with no direct reference to the Emergency, do enable a reading of the socio-political anxieties of the time. *Jaani Dushman* is one such film.

Jaani Dushman is set in a fictionalised north Indian village of the 1970s and is a multi-starred film featuring well-known and high-paid stars of the 1970s, like Sunil Dutt, Jeetendra, Sanjeev Kumar, Neetu Singh and Rekha. It tells the story of a feudal world where an old thakur² (Sanjeev Kumar) commands enormous respect from his fellow villagers. The film throws up an interesting mix of different themes such as romance, unrequited love, chivalry, class-warfare, feudal masculine anxieties and the creation of a fictional landscape. It narrates the story of one Lakhan (Sunil Dutt), a hard-working and morally upright farmer who labours industriously to put together enough money to marry off his only sister Gauri (Neetu Singh). Shanti (Bindiya Goswami), the daughter of the thakur is secretly in love with Lakhan, even though he loves Reshma (Reena Roy). Then there is Amar (Jeetendra) who is in love with Gauri. Shera (Shatrughan Sinha), the son of the thakur, an arrogant and known philanderer, typifies the spoiled brat of a rich father and is shown unwilling to reciprocate the love of Champa (Rekha) as she belongs to a poor section of society. The film meanders towards horror once the narrative reveals that the village was afflicted with a curse: newly-wed brides disappear on their way to their in-laws' houses. The film, then in flashback mode, traces the origin of the curse to a wealthy landlord Jwala Prasad (Raza Murad) who was poisoned by his newly-wed bride. Ever since, his spirit has haunted the village and killed all the newly-married brides. The revengeful spirit possesses the body of the Thakur and whenever he sees a bride in her traditional red wedding attire, he is transformed into a gorilla-like monster and kills her.

² *Thakur* was generally used to refer to the feudal landlord in villages of northern India.

At the level of the narrative, the film establishes a number of strategic modes of communication with the audience. One of the key manifestos of the Emergency was the arbitrary censure of civil liberty. This is metaphorically expressed through the many possession episodes in the film. The film makes extensive use of popular horror film codes and conventions to establish such draconian restrictions on human liberty. An unnamed character in the initial part of the film creates a discourse about ghostly possession: the possessed man shows certain symptoms, such as constant sweat, pursed up lips whilst talking, his body always trembling and his eyes unblinking, unable to stop staring. These traits are constantly visible on the thakur each time the ghost possesses him. Though these are very common film strategies to show how people behave when possessed by evil spirits, they have been hardly spelt out in the cinematic history of Indian horror this far. The deliberate articulation of such traits in the film in the form of a discourse almost insists that the spectator not miss the point the film is trying to make. All these symptoms are related to the control of the body through censure of speech and expression. This can be related to the controlling of public speech and expression so prevalent when the Emergency was enforced in the country. The National Emergency saw the suspension of Article 19 of the Indian constitution. This article ensured the right to freedom of speech and expression, and it is this very freedom of speech and expression that is violated within the filmic narrative. Article 19 also has the provision for ensuring the freedom for an Indian citizen to move freely throughout the territory of India. The suspension of Article 19 also resulted in the restriction on mobility, which comes across on numerous occasions in the film when the newly-wed brides are abducted and killed on their way to their husbands' homes. This particular pattern of brides being picked up on their way to their husband's home can be read as an infringement of the freedom of movement. Further, the *mise-en-scène* at the level of the scenic construction also enables a more direct communication with the audience. The film uses horror to destabilise the normative screen-audience relationship. It subverts the aesthetics of frontality by re-working the frontal mode of address. Frontality is the placing of the camera at a 90-degree angle to the action so that the audience gets to have a 180-degree view, as if seeing the action through a transparent fourth wall, instead of a 360-degree view. This placement of the viewing angle has its own politics of representation in Hindi cinema. It has been argued that most Hindi films largely prefer the frontal mode of address that disrupts the perspectival narration (Vasudevan 1993, 51–79). This creates spatial hierarchies within the film frame between characters in a pre-established manner that seriously impairs the dialogue between the film and the audience (Vitali 2011, 99). However, this film dismantles this frontal mode of address in those moments when the monster attacks its victims. In one such scene, one sees the head of the monster rotating at 360

degrees while the camera vigorously pans left and right. This facilitates the destruction of the unitary frontal mode of address and also symbolically reflects the social crises in the national imaginary during the Emergency period when human rights were curtailed. The monster after all can be imagined as the state going berserk as was the case at the time of the National Emergency. The monstrous figure of the ghost-possessed thakur can be read as metaphorically mirroring the draconian face of the state during the Emergency. The turmoil that his facial expressions reveal during the possessions can very well mirror the fragile condition of the country during an equally ghostly possession of the National Emergency.

Within the filmic narrative, the ghostly possession of the thakur can also be read as his own anxiety at his gradual loss of feudal power amidst the changing fabric of the socio-political order and the rise of other forms of competing masculinities. The source of his masculine anxieties can also be read as stemming from his own gradual loss of power in a society that is moving beyond the feudal world of his youth. Lakhan symbolizes the upright, working-class man with the potential to mobilise public opinion against the class-system and thus upset the carefully orchestrated and well-preserved feudal structure of the thakur. Lakhan for the thakur thus represents an alternative masculinity that threatens to diminish the power of his own. This threat becomes obvious at several moments in the film. Lakhan on one occasion openly accuses him of being the real bride-murderer when the thakur's daughter was not attacked the way other newly-wed girls were. Though Lakhan did not know then about the thakur's ghost-possession, he instinctively feels that only the women of the thakur's subjects were getting killed and the thakur's own daughter did not meet the same fate. This was the first open challenge to the thakur's fiefdom. Then, on several occasions, the thakur had to stop fights between his son Shera and Lakhan. These fights can be read as instances of class antagonism: Lakhan as a self-made man had more acceptability among villagers than the thakur's own son, who threw tantrums at every given opportunity. Lakhan was also the reason behind the severing of ties between the thakur and his son. Unable to rationalise his accusations against the thakur, Lakhan blames Shera for all misgivings. At this point, the whole village takes his side and asks the thakur to punish his son but Shera manages to escape: the father-son relationship however takes a beating. The thakur, in order to save his own skin, also publicly blames his own son for all the murders: this can be read as an instance of the familial structure of the decadent feudal world being destroyed by new-age class mobilisations. With the hey-day of its glory behind, the feudal order does attempt to incorporate new class formations in order to prolong its existence: this explains Shanti's secret love for Lakhan, and the thakur's own hidden fondness and fascination for Lakhan. However all these attempts fail: Shanti's love remains unrequited, and the thakur, of course, cannot fight his fate.

Another explanation of the thakur's masculinity crises can be sought in his own sexual anxiety as a male, an anxiety that is a recurrent theme throughout the film. Jwala Prasad's getting poisoned by his bride on their wedding night is a classic instance of male sexual anxiety. The film uses conventional horror possession episodes to articulate masculine anxiety in the narrative. The thakur is also possessed for the first time when he is about to spend a night in a deserted cave with his beloved, implying sexual union. His being possessed every time he sees a newly married bride and the suggestion of sexual union of the marriage night can be read as his own fear of women and his anxiety about his own sexuality. Most horror films use a strong dark-coloured schema to create a foreboding horrific atmosphere on screen. Keeping with this tradition, this film depicts thakur's anxieties through possession each time he sees a newly-wed bride in her red wedding costume.

The body of the thakur lies at the epicentre of all these crises. The striking contrast between the gorilla-thakur and non-gorilla thakur sets up an interesting exploration of his masculinity. The choice of the actor Sanjeev Kumar to play the role of the thakur also serves to highlight the intensity of the contrast. He was generally known to play the role of a gentle and soft-spoken protagonist in middle-class cinema comedies (*Angoor* (The Comedy of Errors), 1982), or of a repentant father (*Trishul* (Trident), 1978), and his most famous role—the wronged thakur of *Sholay* (Embers, 1975). His raping and killing of newly-wed women when possessed by the ghost, besides symbolising the cruelty of the feudal world against women can also be read as the crisis of his own masculinity. The decadent feudal masculinity is on the verge of extinction and in comes the newer age masculinity, essentially a product of new-age class formations. The film narrative shows the thakur and the feudal world's inability to adjust to the new societal patterns, which leads to their downfall. The film also at another level explores the rampant violation of human rights during the Emergency period and establishes a dialogue with the audience in this regard. The thakur's body also becomes the site of the typical male sexual anxiety.

Punnami Naagu

The 1980 Telugu film *Punnami Naagu* is deeply rooted in the feudal and caste politics of 1970s and 1980s Andhra Pradesh. Unlike Hindi cinema, which tries to cater to a pan-Indian audience and in the process often deliberately avoiding local issues (Raghavendra 2010, 175), regional films are 'far more culture specific and rooted in their communities in terms of subjects and their treatment. They use their local idioms, manners and customs to make a greater claim on realism' (Benegal 2007, 232). This potboiler starring Chiranjeevi narrates the story of the protagonist Naagalu who is fed snake poison by his father right from childhood. As a result his body

becomes snake-poison resistant, but it also turns out in the end that the poison has transformed his constitution, turning him into a snake every ‘punnamī’, that is every full moon. His repentant father tells him the secret of his remedy before he dies, but it is already too late as Naagalu’s skin moults with a periodicity akin to snakes, accompanied by a powerful desire for sexual union that leads finally to his death—discovered by the community, ultimately, he ends up committing suicide by jumping from a mountain-top. The film follows Naagalu through adolescence quickly to bring him to a full-grown youth when his vocation every full moon was to mesmerize some pretty young woman, who, hypnotically drawn by his eyes, would be found dead the next morning, with Naagalu nowhere near her. The body-politics permit the exoticisation of Naagalu’s body. The visual and audio iconography of the film draws on the horror genre conventions to establish Naagalu’s predatory tendencies. The mise-en-scene of these full moon narratives permits reading between the lines: the naive but often buxom women would suddenly find themselves lurching towards the very virile Naagalu, whose physical attractiveness sets him apart from the average local male body-type. The film’s soundtrack confirms that there is a structural equivalence in how the prey is drawn: the same song accompanies their drift towards Naagalu. The setting—surreally entangled in what appears to be the branches of a lone and very old banyan tree in some forest wilderness—is also the same for all of them, as is the hour of night: dark, yet ethereally lit up by a moon that appears to mimic daylight. Naagalu’s and the women’s gazes meet at midpoint of the song; both appear hypnotically drawn to one another and the romantic song narrative suggests coitus through this embrace of the eyes, followed by bodily contact—a chaste but intense embrace of bodies. The context however suggests that this embrace is a metaphor for sexual intercourse. The next morning sees these women dead: the first such woman is Naagalu’s beloved; the next prey is a female teacher—clad in markedly urban clothing and carrying a camera, the emblem of advanced technology and emancipation. Out of every such encounter a repentant Naagalu would emerge traumatised with his uncontrollable lust and desire for sexual union. The film perhaps best magnifies his uneasiness with his masculinity in the scene when the camera focusses on a highly traumatised Naagalu in front of a mirror peeling off his facial skin. At a metaphorical level, this scene shows a male subject frustrated with his inability to fashion a coherent understanding of his changing masculinity, and who can feel his masculine self-disintegrating beyond public acceptance. The film, once again, uses horror to depict this turmoil in his mind.

Naagalu’s body becomes the site of the interplay of class and caste politics depicted in the film. It is obvious that the snakes themselves synecdochically represent the tribal world of the snake charmers who are then considered to be a dangerous

entity within the premises of both class and caste. The snake-charmers represent a de-notified section of the Indian population who not only lie at a very low level of class and caste hierarchy, but whose profession is considered illegal. The Wildlife Protection Act passed by India in 1972 prohibits anyone from exporting or owning snakes. Tribal communities like the *Irulas* of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh and *Kalbelia* of Rajasthan, known for their snake-catching prowess, had a harrowing time after the passage of this Act. This had a bearing on their personal lives too:

In the 1970s, most of the *Irula* were immobile; if they had to get anywhere they walked. No bicycles or public transport for them. You couldn't blame them, they were paranoid about being identified and getting kicked off buses for carrying snakes. They are a dark people with curly hair, and when armed with a crowbar, their tool of the trade, the *Irula* stick out from the rest of the population. As with many tribal peoples, the focus of the *Irula*'s interaction with the world is to blend in as much as possible. (Lenin 2011)

This blending was also necessitated by the fact that more and more forest areas were dwindling because of ever expanding urban world. However, this blending with the society was far from smooth. They were looked down upon and were repeatedly refused caste certificates by the authorities concerned, which led to their loss of educational and professional opportunities (Karthikeyan 2008). Naagalu's tragic predicament has undertones of the hardships that an average individual belonging to the snake-catching community has to face even today. The crisis in masculinity of Naagalu in the film is evident in his three major relationships: with his father, with his love-interest Menaka, and with Menaka's adopted brother. Naagalu's tragedy arises from the fact that without his knowledge or acceptance, his father fed him snake-poison since childhood. His fate is thus of an average young snake-charmer who perforce inherits his 'illegal' profession. The burden of inheritance is something that Naagalu is never able to shed as it defines his own existence, his own masculinity. And the film narrative constantly vilifies the subaltern snake charmer class by showing them in a dangerous light. In the initial part of the film, it is shown that Naagalu's father deliberately summons his captive snake to bite a Brahmin priest after the priest prevents him from raping a woman. The priest dies of snake bite. The film thus posits the lower-class and -caste snake charmer as the violator and the upper caste Brahmin priest as the protector. This class and caste warfare continues with the next generation too, in the form of hostility between Naagalu and Menaka's adopted brother who turns out to be the dead priest's son. Predictably, he is the hero and Naagalu the villain in the film. In a twist to this class and caste warfare, the film shows Naagalu sexually involved with Menaka and her brother romantically involved with Naagalu's sister. While Naagalu kills Menaka during their sexual consummation, Menaka's brother and Naagalu's sister are shown to live happily ever after. The film thus makes a statement, which is very parochial and serves to maintain the interests of the upper class and caste.

Symbolically the film affirms the stereotypical upper class/ caste views that inter-caste marriage outside the class tampers the 'purity' of the blood. This is emphasised using characteristic elements of the horror genre. Naagalu is shown as a monster (read lower class/ caste) out to prey the vulnerable (read upper class/ caste), and Menaka's death will be the fate of all such upper class/ caste individuals who are involved in relationships unsanctioned by the class/ caste patriarchs. At the same time, it is also shown that the upper class/ caste man can choose to take a woman much lower from his social position provided that she severs ties with her family. Thus towards the end, Naagalu's sister is shown suspecting Naagalu of monstrosity, spurred on by her lover's own doubts about him. Her emotional separation from her brother will be complete with her physical separation in the form of his death. Thus with all ties to her family finally severed, Naagalu's sister is swiftly accommodated within the family structure of the dominant social caste/ class of the society. Metaphorically, the film then depicts how the normative understanding of 'family' is limited to the upper class/ caste structure, which maintains its status quo by destroying all alternative structures. Thus at the end of the film, Naagalu's family lies totally disintegrated. The final cog of that disintegration lies in the final face-off between him and Menaka's brother, the hero of the film: he berates Naagalu, in a sermon tinged with strategic sympathy, for his crossing over to the non-human realm of monstrosity. With nowhere to go and utterly disgusted at the shame of his own uncontrollable monstrous masculinity, Naagalu commits suicide in the end.

The film uses horror to 'other' the lower class/ caste snake charming communities from mainstream Andhra society. This othering is located very much through the body, with Naagalu's moulting skin serving as a marker of the passage. The narrative mirrors the cruelties meted out by the feudal upper caste/ class through a physical, emotional and mental assault, a feature quite common in Andhra Pradesh of the 1970s and 1980s where the entire state machinery would collude in secret understanding with the cash-rich upper castes to deny Dalits their fundamental rights (Satyanarayana, 206–16). Naagalu's masculinity is the focal point of such cruelties and assaults. His masculinity is as much shaped by his inheritance as by the swelling resentment and antagonism against him. The enigma of his non-normative masculinity is a product of the social othering of his caste, class and profession. The film depicts horrific images of his draconian sexual self to vindicate the construction of his virile, and if one may add, villainous masculinity. It is another matter of course that the actor playing the role of Naagalu, was soon going to be christened the reigning superstar of Telugu cinema for decades to come.

Conclusion

To conclude, this article has striven to explore how animal transformation Indian horror films can be a significant articulation of gendered subjectivities of their times. Without any doubt, all the films discussed above might have other equally valid interpretations; yet, this study shows how these films enter in a dialogue with the audience in a way of which film scholarship in India has yet to make a serious critical study. Animal transformation horror films are an essentially read as a product of their socio-political macrocosmic world. These films have valuable ideas and perspectives to contribute and in the process, they do refer to the social, political, economic and cultural developments of India, sometimes overtly, other times more discretely. While *Jaani Dushman* can be read as a disguised critique of the National Emergency, *Punnami Naagu* brings to the fore the issue of caste politics of the 1970s and 1980s Andhra Pradesh. It can be that these films were inspired from their Western counterparts or even other regional cinemas of India, yet the filmmakers have always adapted them to their local settings in the process bringing to light some of the lost indigenous folk-tales, customs and beliefs. The focus of this study has been more on the male body of the protagonist(s) who undergo the transformation. However, it cannot be discounted that the other characters in these films, major or minor, male or female, also might have useful critical perspectives to offer. At times, this article examines the role and the usefulness of such characters. But mostly, this study has been faithful to the primary focus of these films: an individual getting transformed to animal and vice-versa. And it has been very interesting to observe that while woman-to-animal film narratives offer reciprocal gender negotiation dialectics, man-to-animal horror films works within the ambit of a masculinity crises.

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