

Questioning the Predominant Feminism in Ahalya, a Short Film by Sujoy Ghosh

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Abstract : Ahalya, the critically acclaimed short film, is known to demolish the gender constructs of the age old myth of Ahalya. The paper tries to crack the overt meaning of the short film by reading between the dialogues and deconstructing the idea of the pseudo feminism in the short film Ahalya by Sujoy Ghosh. The film, by subverting the role of male character by making it seem submissive as compared to the female character's role seems to be just a surface level reading of the text. It seems that Sujoy Ghosh has played not just with changing the paradigm, but also trying to alter the history by doing so. The age old myth of putting Ahalya as a part of the five virgins (panchkanya) of Hindu mythology is explored in the paper. God's manoeuvre cannot be questioned and the two male characters tend to again shape the deed and the life of the female character, Ahalya. It is of importance to note that even in the 21st century, progressive actors like Radhika Apte fail to acknowledge the politics of altering history, not in a progressive way. The film blinds the viewer in the first watch to fall for the female strength and ownership of her sexuality, which is reflected in the opening scene itself where she opens the gate for the police man Indra Sen (representing God Indra who seduced her) who is charmed by her white dress. White, in Hindu mythology, stands for mourning, and this can be a hint towards the prophecy of what is about to come. Ahalya, bold, strong, and confident in this scene seems to be in total ownership of her sexual identity. Further, as the film progresses, control of Ahalya over her acts becomes even more dominant. In the myth of Ahalya, Gautama Maharishi, her husband, who wins her by Brahma's courtesy, curses her for her infidelity. She is then turned into a stone because of the curse and is redeemed when Lord Rama's foot brushes the stone. In the film, it is with the help of Ahalya that Goutam Sadhu turns Indra Sen into a stone doll. Ahalya is seen as a seductress who bewitches Indra Sen, and because the latter falls for the trap laid by the husband wife duo, he is turned into a doll. The attempt made by the paper is to read Ahalya as a character of the stand in wife who is yet again a pawn in the play of Goutama's revenge from Indra (who in the myth is able to escape from any curse or punishment for the act). The paper, therefore, reverts the idea which has till now been signified by the film and attempts to study the feminism this film appropriates. It is essential to break down the structure formed by such overt transgressing films in order to provide a real outlook of how feminism is twisted and moulded according to a man's wishes.

Keywords : deconstructing, Hindu mythology, Panchkanya, predominant feminism, seductress, stone doll

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