



Do clothes make the woman?

by Arunmozhy Thangaropan & Myurathy Muhunthan

To show or not to show. That is the question women are asking themselves. Celebrities in the East Indian movie industry are finding themselves succumbing to the "strip syndrome". We are not talking about the vulgar, crass kind of exposure of B-grade sleaze, nor the occasional flash of skin to tantalize the audience but rather an aesthetic, wholesome, bodily exposure reflecting the new, open, liberal and progressive morality of the day. "Skin is in", and "Body is beautiful" are two abject lessons that India and the world have woken up to in a positive manner.

As we move into the age of clinging lycra, tank tops and mini-skirts, the loosely clad traditional clothes (revealing nothing) are losing some of their popularity. A change in society's attitudes are causing a change in attire. Both men and women in the East Indian film industry, previously known for its conservative image, are now being pressured to reveal more of their body. Old traditions are not necessarily being abandoned, however, new ideas about what women and men should be like are emerging. Western culture has a tremendous influence on this movie industry, while the movie industry influences the people of India who are beginning to alter the way they dress and act, accordingly.

This is not to say that "to show" is wrong, as long as the individual is not pressured into fitting the molds of society. If done with class, exposing can be an art form.

Although both men and women are affected by the expectations of the society, women in the Indian film industry feel the brunt of the "Strip Syndrome". More and more roles require the women to expose parts of their body. It is a question of



Cover of a popular Indian movie magazine. We're not kidding!

who is willing to show more. Often more cleavage and more leg means more money. In this sense, the women are being exploited. Many actresses have refused roles simply because they are not willing to show their own body. Others have been told by an adamant movie industry that unless they expose they will lose the role. This suggests that one's body is the feature of the film not the situation or story. On the other hand, there are those who feel that exposing is a basic part of life and they are

willing to do so. Essentially, it is the individual's decision whether to show or not show.

India does not excessively oppress or exploit its women in comparison to other nations. Women do have a great deal of respect and have equal access to education as do the men.

Across the world there is a progression towards full exposure of the body. It is obvious that the sexual revolution is indeed emerging rapidly, and now India is also incorporating liberal ideas. In the past, India

disapproved of such exposure, finding it crude. Exposure and nudity were taboo. However, in recent East Indian movies there is a flexible attitude towards exposure.

Traditions and customs which have proven to benefit either men or women should be kept; those that oppress one or the other should be abandoned. A combination of Eastern and Western values which do not discriminate between genders will achieve a happy medium.

Propaganda: the poison of pressure

by Arunmozhy Thangaropan

Advertising can be seen as the propaganda of Western society. It suggests that the right product can fix the most complex human problems. It depends on making us anxious and insecure. "Us" refers mainly to women. Exploitation of women in the advertising industry is not a novel concept. It has been occurring for decades, yet there seems to be very slow (if any) move to change this. Women have been given a subordinate position in the advertising industry in the way they are used to sell products.

Women are not portrayed as human beings, but rather as objects of sexual pleasure. Men in advertising tend to be invulnerable, in power, and in control. Human qualities are divided and separated and those seen as feminine are devalued.

Especially infuriating are ads that try to promote their interests by portraying beautiful women using their products. Soap and makeup commercials on television insinuate that using a particular brand of product will automatically allow you to achieve the "perfect" body.

perfection. The quest for the slender, hourglass figure drives many people towards dieting and strenuous aerobic exercise.

Advertising industries use this human insecurity to sell their product. Women are made to feel ashamed and embarrassed if their

double standard.

Aside from body and makeup companies, beer companies and automobile companies are examples of advertising directed towards men use these methods. In a recent issue of GQ, a Parker pen advertisement featured a naked woman using the pen to hold her hair up in a bun. Aside from the fact that Parker pens have many convenient uses, there really is no apparent connection between a naked woman and a pen. Whether it be a Moosehead commercial or Hawaiian Airlines, one fact confronts us: Women are being exploited in the advertising industry.

Car companies, also love to showcase half naked women draped over the front end of the car. And what better way to sell Pepsi than to feature supermodel Cindy Crawford with her scanty tops and shorts. Makes one wonder, what is really up for sale.

"there really is no apparent connection between a naked woman and a pen"

Makeup products are there to enhance a woman's natural beauty. But why is there need to surpass natural beauty to produce a superficial look? Women are pressured by society to attain the image of a model from the front cover of Vogue magazine. Men have set these standards, and women are obsessed with trying to achieve

imperfections show through. By using Clarion lipstick or Revlon mascara, these flaws will supposedly be a problem of the past. Men have far fewer makeup products on the market than women, and they are not pressured half as much as women to achieve perfection in their appearance. Clearly this represents a



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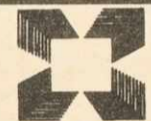
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