

Chapter 9: Unstable-selves and more-than-human-worlds: A posthuman feminist reading of patriarchal misinterpretation in Aparna Sen's 15 park avenue

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Abstract: Female subjectivity in Indian cinema can often be interpreted in both a humanist and a patriarchal context; however, while doing so, the relationship between the psyche, autonomy, and biomedical explanations for mental illness give preferential treatment to those who are "normal." The film *15 Park Avenue* presents a fractured female subject whose reality creates a space where the distinction between sanity or madness, imagination or materiality becomes indistinguishable. This film also represents an example where instability of the mind, is interpreted not as being cognitively impaired but rather as an alternate form of being that also has a conflict with; psychiatry, family structures, and marriage. The way the film is structured does not provide a diagnosis nor does it provide closure with a particular narrative, however it allows for recognition of how the dominant systems of interpretation do not fully understand a female subject's experience, informed by trauma, emotion, and societal disconnection. The imagined domestic setting at *15 Park Avenue* is created by the interaction of memory, the physical environment and absence. Furthermore, the film glorifies the caregiving of women as having an ethical connection to each other, rather than normalizing. However, the film articulates the perspective of cinematic ethics as related to post-human feminism and relational subjectivity, based on current definitions of Indian Feminist Cinema.

Keywords: Posthumanism, Female Subjectivity, More-than-Human Worlds, *15 Park Avenue*, Non-normativity

1 Introduction

The Indian Film industry historically portrays feminine Perspectives of Self and Identity using a male dominated framework, which awards legitimacy to psychological uniformity, purposeful action, and scientific validity. As such women's reproductive organs (wombs) tend to produce or create avenues of experience not associated with