

*FEMINA* – A PRESCRIPTION FOR THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT

by

SEEMA VIJAYAN

(Under the Direction of Leara Rhodes)

ABSTRACT

This study attempts to show that *Femina*, the largest nationally circulated English-language women's magazine in India, is an institution created to advance the cause for women in a patriarchal society. With globalization proving to be the constant impetus for change, the pages of *Femina* offer women a cultural space where femininity is constantly being defined, described, re-invented and defended. Using qualitative methods, a textual analysis is done to explore the patterns of representation in this magazine. The multiple modernities thesis is the theory employed based on which *Femina* creates its own outlook for women; it offers them a space where the women exist and make sense of their existence.

Index Words: *Femina*, Femininity, Globalization, Women's magazines, Textual analysis, Indian women, Multiple Modernities Thesis, Social Imaginary

*FEMINA: A PRESCRIPTION FOR THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT*

by

SEEMA VIJAYAN

B.A., The University of Texas, Austin 2000

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2004

© 2004

Seema Vijayan

All Rights Reserved

*FEMINA*: A PRESCRIPTION FOR THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT

by

SEEMA VIJAYAN

Major Professor:      Leara Rhodes

Committee:            Jay Hamilton  
                                 Janice Hume

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso  
Dean of the Graduate School  
The University of Georgia  
December 2004

## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to all women all over the world who strive for better.

ISHWARKE EVE  
(Eve Speaks to God)

I was first to realize that which rises must fall inevitably.  
Like light like dark like you I was first to know.

Obeying you or disobeying you means the same.  
I was first to know.

I was first to touch the tree of knowledge first to bite the red apple.  
I was first, first – first to distinguish between modesty and immodesty – by raising a wall with a fig leaf I changed things totally.

I was first.  
I was first pleasure, my body consoled the first sorrow.  
I was first to see your face of a child.  
Amidst grief and joy I was first.  
I first knew sorrow and pleasure, good and evil, made life so uncommon.  
I was first to break the golden shackles of luxurious pleasure.  
I was never a puppet to dance to your tune like meek Adam.

I was rebellion first on your earth.

Listen, love, yes, my slave, I was the first rebel – banished from paradise, exiled.

-----Kabita Sinha.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many without whose help in one form or another this thesis would not be what it is. First among them, Dr. Rhodes thank you for encouraging me to do my thesis and helping me throughout the process. I am deeply grateful to you for having taken out the time and effort in helping me not just with this research project, but making me a better writer. Thank you for listening to me and for all your advice. Dr. Hamilton, thank you for responding to every e-mail and for being extremely considerate. Dr. Hume thank you for being on my committee.

I would also like to thank my parents, my in-laws, Unni, Shiju, and my friends for listening to me vent my numerous frustrations and encouraging me to keep going on. Thanks to Vimla Patil for taking time out and offering invaluable information. Most importantly, to Ani for being there for me and with me right from the beginning, supporting me and helping me think things through.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
A BRIEF HISTORY OF <i>FEMINA</i> .....	4
2 LITERATURE REVIEW.....	11
WESTERN MEDIA PREFERENCES.....	11
GROWING POPULARITY OF WOMEN’S MAGAZINES.....	14
SCHOLARSHIP ON THE HISTORY OF WOMEN’S MAGAZINES IN INDIA...25	
PRIOR STUDIES ON <i>FEMINA</i> .....	30
OVERVIEW OF THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT IN INIDA.....	35
WRITING AS AN IDEOLOGICAL TOOL.....	41
GLOBALIZATION MAKES AN INTORDUCTION.....	48
3 THEORY AND METHOD.....	54
INTRODUCTION TO THE SOCIAL SPHERE.....	55
MUTLIPL E MODERNITIES THESIS.....	58
METHOD.....	65
4 ANALYSIS.....	67
RE-ARRANGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL MARRIAGES.....	67
THE INTERNATIONALLY AWARE AND INFORMED HOMEMAKER AND THE MOTHER WHO PREFERS HAVING DAUGHTERS TO SONS.....	70
AN EXEMPLAR OF WOMANHOOD – THE SUPERWOMAN.....	72

SINGLE IN THE MIX.....	73
NEW IDENTITIES AND NEW CAREERS.....	73
<i>FEMINA</i> AND A NEW GENERATION OF MEN.....	74
<i>FEMINA</i> AND THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT.....	75
GLOBALIZATION AIDS <i>FEMINA</i> .....	78
CONCLUSIONS.....	79
5 DISCUSSION.....	82
REFERENCES.....	88

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

*Femina*, the largest nationally circulated English-language women's magazine in the Indian sub-continent, serves as a bridge in this country that is severed by 18 different languages and innumerable castes and classes. A quick glance at the glossy cover of this magazine and you will find an uncanny resemblance to the U.S. edition of *Marie Claire*. The thread that links these two magazines begins with the presence of common articles: the latest fashion trends, revolutionary make-up products and tips, ways to achieve the ideal body, rituals that enable women to have the perfect skin, products that help reduce cellulite, ways to find the perfect man, self-help literature and relationship queries. What's more, celebrities and the who's who of society routinely find themselves being discussed in these pages. However, amidst such frivolous issues, more grave topics such as single parenthood, violence against women and ways to empower them are also included.

With such an endless stream of similarities the first obvious difference between the two magazines is that *Femina* is written for Indian women, while *Marie Claire* caters to an American audience. Since these magazines operate from culturally different terrains, they place emphasis and prescribe different identities for women. *Marie Claire* therefore urges women to be confident about their sexuality among other things, while *Femina* places a greater importance on marriage and motherhood.

*Femina*, started out with being a support network for women, became a housebound woman's window to the world, and then her guide to a new life. Today, it is the reflection of her achievements, her ambitions and the status she enjoys in her house as well as in society.

-- (Patil, 1997, p.15)

*Femina* operates from within a patriarchal society and is a part of the growing feminist consciousness of this 1.3 billion Indian populace. It caters primarily to women, to women of all shapes and sizes, to women who come from different socioeconomic levels of society, to women who know what they want and are not afraid to pursue it. Sathya Saran, current editor of the magazine says:

*Femina's* target audience starts off with the young woman who's just out of college and is at the first rung of her career. Or a woman who's well on her way to being professionally qualified. Of course, housewives also read *Femina* but they are the women who are housewives by choice. Our audience is the housewife who makes the family or the aggressive career women who makes the workplace. The young woman of today is like quick silver. She changes with every passing day. We are 44 years old and yet there is a need to think young. *Femina* has to cater to the modern woman who is enterprising, career minded, family oriented, intelligent and more aware of her needs and wants, and we have to keep in step with her.

-- (Saran, 2003)

The magazine definitely tries to keep in step with its audience and has done so ever since it arrived on stands in 1959 and has even survived competition from other English language magazines such as *Woman's Era*, and *Eve* and is now an empire that hosts the Miss India beauty pageant (Patil, 2004, personal communication). This fortnightly magazine, based in Mumbai (formerly called Bombay - India's New York City), in the state of Maharashtra, is published by Times of India Group (launched in 1838) and it has evolved over the years to parallel and support the woman's movement.

This study thereby attempts to show that the magazine offers a cultural space where femininity is defined, described, re-invented and defended. Radha Sharma Hegde, *Recipes for Change: Weekly Help for Indian Women*, analyzed the prescriptions for women's identity in *Femina*; it serves as the basis for this academic work. This present work will not only help magazine publishers better understand the market they are catering to, but will argue that women's magazines serve as an essential tool to advance woman's stand in society.

Additionally, this study hopes to add to a series of works by researchers who strive hard to dispel the image of the stereotypical battered Third World woman, and attempts to acknowledge and credit those women who dare to challenge and change patriarchy.

Western concepts of defining the media are used to explain magazine consumerism in India. Based on this notion, *Femina*, is not only a successful business venture, but is also an institution that is created by women to advance their cause in society. The theory used is the 'multiple modernities thesis' that states, "each nation or region produces its own distinctive modernity in its encounter with the allegedly culture-neutral forms and processes (science and technology, industrialization, secularization, bureaucratization, and so on) characteristic of societal modernization. Under the impact of modernity, all societies will undergo certain changes in both outlook and institutional arrangements" (Gaonkar, 2002, p.4). Moreover according to this concept, modernity is inseparable from the 'social imaginary,' which is defined as the way by which people imagine and enable their existence.

In this regard, *Femina* produces its own distinctive identity for women and the prescriptions for multiple identities continue to evolve as the magazine interacts and is influenced by globalization. In a sense, this magazine is a manifestation of the 'social imaginary' of those women who produce and consume *Femina*; these women thereby enable their existence through these pages. Consequently, the women of this society redefine themselves and they employ the pages of a magazine to alter the terrain of society and produce multiple identities for themselves, making sure that "representations of femininity, race and nation become alloyed with global culture" (Parmeswaran, 2002, p.289). Using qualitative methods, a textual analysis is done to explore the patterns of representation in the pages of this magazine. The research questions that guide this study are:

- R1: What role does *Femina* want to play in the lives of its readers?
- R2: How does the magazine appeal to both genders to promote feminism?
- R3: How does *Femina*, as part of the growing consciousness of the feminist movement, relate to the process of globalization and development?

#### A BRIEF HISTORY OF FEMINA:

Until 1947, most Indians had one aim in mind and that was freedom from the clutches of the British Empire. Once the sub-continent was liberated, people began to look towards other goals and some of those goals included gender equality. Compared to years prior to the independence era, the early 1950s saw the greatest number of women attend universities and as a result these women were able to read English. This increase in educational levels and the ability to communicate in English provided a suitable atmosphere for English-language women's magazines to evolve and thrive. It was in this environment that *Trend*, a lifestyles magazine that catered to women, emerged and this magazine belonged to the Eves weekly group. The editor of *Trend*, Frene Talyarkhan, had a fall out with the group and she, along with Indu Sen, started another magazine called *Flair*. Soon *Times of India* bought the magazine and in July 1959 the first issue of *Femina - Incorporating Flair* was launched. At that time, the staff was restricted to a handful of people. "There were Frene, the Editor; Ina, the Assistant Editor, three sub-editors including myself and Indu Rao who was Frene's confidential secretary. In a month's time Rajam Thirumalai was also hired as the filing clerk-typist," recalls Patil (Patil, 1997, p.20).

*Femina*, at that time, catered to about one percent of India's English educated population, who had the ability to lead the future, and this magazine wanted to create and encourage that leadership. Initially that leadership meant men and, as a result, the magazine had more male

readers than female. The sub-continent was finally united, and this magazine in the 1960s portrayed a new kind of Indian woman by marrying the diverse cuisines, looks and styles that traversed the length and breadth of this country. The magazine was therefore successful not only because it portrayed the new Indian woman, but also because it created a network for women. Women who until then had not traveled were now made aware of how their counterparts lived in different areas of the country.

With 48 to 64 pages and an initial print order of 21,000, the magazine was set to make a difference. So what did this magazine originally look like? “*Femina* was in those days printed on the gravure system. Its color pages, few as they were, featured food, fashion sketches and pictures, beauty routines and other tidbits dear to a woman’s heart” (Patil, 1997, p.21). Thus, through these pages women from all corners of the nation were brought together and given a forum where issues of concern and relevance were discussed. The topics of discussion, at that time, centered on entertainment and there was no talk about women’s rights or responsibilities.

In 1960, the editor’s chair was taken over by Dr. K.D. Jhangiani (the only male editor in the history of this magazine) and he brought about a few changes that increased the readership. Jhangiani made the magazine more stylish, and he introduced sections that catered to lower middle class people, a page for teenagers and letters to the editor. His input worked for the magazine and soon 25,000 to 30,000 copies were sold every fortnight. Despite the increase in sales, having a man as editor of a woman’s magazine caused dissent among the staff. Patil who worked for him for some time writes, “As yet, *Femina* was a magazine edited by a man, who portrayed a woman’s world as concerning mainly the home, the husband and the children. I remember fuming and stamping my feet in anger when one Diwali (the festival of lights) the headline to a jewelry feature said: ‘Ask your lord and master to buy you jewelry this Diwali.’ I

do not remember if this line was printed or not, but it symbolized the content of *Femina*. [...]; but the slant of most features was that women should be well dressed, beautiful yet domesticated and wise” (p.29). Around July 1973, Jhangiani retired and the magazine chose a woman to lead it, who did so successfully for the next 29 years.

Vimla Patil, who became editor in 1973, says that her goal for the magazine was to make the Indian woman economically independent, and the influence of the women’s worldwide movement on the sub-continent in 1976 aided her in that task (Patil, 2004, personal communication). “*Femina* was designed as a bridge between women and their new world. It was a journal where they could express themselves, say whatever they wished to say, ask questions and get reliable answers. It provided information to millions of eager women on how to make better homes, how to educate themselves, how to bring up their children, how to make a nutritious variety of food, how to manage money, how to plan careers, how to balance family and job successfully” (Patil, 1997, p.38). This enthusiastic claim may not entirely be true, but the magazine did bring about a significant number of changes for women. Patil also says that people from different parts of the world were flown in to educate and inform the women and in time the magazine caused a lot of banking and tax laws to be changed in the country. In India women reportedly owned very little property by themselves and the banks required a husband’s consent for a wife to get a loan; *Femina* created an environment where women could get loans by themselves (p.71). In addition to financial independence some of the other issues that the magazine covered and fought for included the need to bring about laws that prohibited dowry and allowed women to get a divorce (p.54).

The years from 1975 to 1980 showed great promise as there was a phenomenal growth in the number of readers, many of whom were now educated and informed women. Added to this

was the fact that the magazine was now written by women for women. Patil writes, “the ‘new woman’ was cognizant of the world-wide information explosion and the women’s liberation in the West and of books like *Sexual Politics*, *The Second Sex* and *The Female Eunuch*. The issues raised by these books and magazines like *Ms* edited by Gloria Steinem, were discussed in the print media endlessly and India was not untouched by these winds of change” (p.36). Thus, according to Patil, the magazine addressed every topic imaginable from sex to sports and catered to a reader who was socially aware, educated in the English medium, was a graduate with a middle class family income of Rs. 5,000 (approximately \$100 per month) and was one who was aware of her duty towards society. Men were never excluded from the audience and the reason for that was because, “men are the door openers in society and no society can go ahead leaving one gender behind” (Patil, 2004, personal communication). Hence, even today men reportedly constitute about 50 percent of the readership (Patil, 2004, personal communication).

By the end of the seventies the magazine was gaining acceptance and popularity as it presented messages of women’s liberation and equality in a manner that was acceptable to Indian society. The magazine soon not only crisscrossed the nation, but also began to be exported to countries like Sri Lanka, South Africa and Bangladesh among others. In the eighties *Femina* helped launch a movement by which women could succeed in whatever they hoped to achieve. “*Femina* led this movement by doing career research, social research and developing a data bank for the new Eighties’ woman” (Patil, 1997, p.67). In this effort, the magazine attempted to tear the shroud of secrecy around issues like menstruation, childbirth and female anatomy and printed articles and exclusive sketches to educate the reader (p.69). While this was controversial, it also made *Femina* a reliable source and soon, the pages had experts from the medical field and later from the banking industry present relevant accurate information. Around this time, the

handloom industry in India began to move forward as well and the magazine aided in its development as the pages began to promote national fabrics, fashion and Indian designers. Additionally, *Femina* helped establish shelter homes for battered women and children. Thus, *Femina* was not just a platform that launched the woman's movement, but it was a decisive agent that changed the tapestry of life for many in the nation (p.119).

Until the late 1980s the magazine aimed to include the English-educated middle class women and men. However, "around this time frame *Femina* was transformed into a magazine at par with several of its contemporaries in Europe and the United States and from then began to cater exclusively to the upper middle-class group" (Parulekar, 2001, p.2). The magazine since then has had a huge readership not just among the upper middle-class and elite women in India, but includes those in the diaspora as well. It is now sold widely in the United Arab Emirates, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Canada, Australia, Nepal and Saudi Arabia. "This shift in readership is reflected in the price, which jumped from four rupees in 1986 to fifty rupees in 1998" (Parulekar, 2001, p.2). Thus, from a business point of view *Femina* has to cater to many different kinds of women and hence seeks to have something in it for everyone to maximize sales and increase readership.

This commodification of magazines is explained by researcher Janice Winship: "if the profile of women's magazines is partly determined by the state of play between women and men, it is also shaped by a consumer culture geared to selling and making a profit from commodities, and whole sales are boosted through the medium of advertising" (1987, p.9). *Femina's* present editor, Sathya Saran adds to this, "the definition of a magazine is an amalgamation or a compilation of different types of articles. In today's scenario, all magazines try and incorporate a bit of everything in order to cater to different types of people. *Femina* thus has a certain amount

of content dedicated to fashion and accessories but the objective is certainly not to drift the Verve or the Cosmo way” (Saran, 2003). Thus, in a world, where money speaks volumes, copies have to be sold to the greatest number of people and to do so the content has to appeal to a wide array of consumers. Furthermore, in an attempt to reach more consumers, there were many endeavors made to translate this magazine into Hindi, the country’s national language, so that women at the lower levels of society could also be reached. However, none of those efforts converted into reality. Thus, this magazine still primarily caters to educated women who are well versed in English; but Patil believes that there will be a ripple effect produced by these elite women, which will ultimately affect the lives of those who don’t have access to this magazine. “Since the language of *Femina* was English, it was presumed that only women with university education would be its readers. But these were the readers who would eventually influence a whole generation of Indian women and create a new concept of womanhood” (Patil, 1997, p.39). Now the magazine claims a circulation rate of 160,000. Interestingly, amidst prescribing women with numerous identities *Femina* found another way to ensure a devoted future generation of readers and came out with *Femina Girl*. This offshoot caters to young girls and guides them through aspects of their life. “A lot of 12 and 13 year olds read *Femina*, and it was necessary to come up with something, which would be more appropriate for them. *Femina Girl* is complimentary; we are giving them information on things, which are more suited for their age. It can be regarded as their own private space. Of course, they are most welcome to read *Femina* but there isn’t as much content in the magazine for young girls. One or two sections like beauty and health may cater to their needs, but the majority of the content is for women who are older. Which is why, *Femina* came up with *Femina Girl*” (Saran, 2003). However, it would be naïve to view *Femina*’s prescriptions for numerous identities as just a business ploy.

Consequently, this study attempts to show that *Femina* creates a space where “complementary and contradictory female identities” can exist (McRobbie, 1996, p.189). “But at the end of the day, a woman needs her own private space. There are so few places in the world where a woman is given her due importance; here she can always turn to a voice that is dedicated solely to her” (Saran, 2003). *Femina* is therefore the voice of today’s Indian woman.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

A plethora of studies exist on media consumption and women's magazines in western societies, while those that concentrate on the non-west, specifically India, are few and far between. Presentation of past research is as follows: western media preferences (specifically print and an analysis of the medium's audience); popularity of women's magazines in Western and developing societies and its significance; scholarship on women's magazines in India; studies done on *Femina*; overview of the feminist movement in India; importance of writing by women and men from Third World nations; and the impact of globalization.

#### WESTERN MEDIA PREFERENCES:

A number of sociological studies examine Western media preferences and attitudes, and many are based on Carl Jung's study of character types and entertainment media choices. For example Philip Anst explores Jung's theory and in his study found that while no two persons react exactly the same way to identical media content, intuitive types pick novels while sensory types choose movies and TV (1966, p.729). This seems to suggest that every consumer uses the media to meet his or her own needs and that the same content may be interpreted very differently by two individuals and may evoke different reactions from them as well (p.729). Charles W. King and John O. Summers took this study further and added that attitudes are related not only to media exposure but also to the meaning, which the medium and the content has for the individual (1971, p.26). However, individuals have not been the only area of focus for researchers.

Leonard Reissman looked at how class, leisure and social participation interact and concluded that those people in 'higher' class positions were more active and diverse in their participation than those in 'lower' positions (1954, p.76). Thus, indicating that "the middle class generally tend to dominate the organizational activity, the intellectual life, and the leadership of the community" (Reissman, 1954, p.78). In this study, class was determined by looking at three variables: income, occupation, and education. Furthermore, while looking at various leisure activities that individuals tend to engage in, Reissman found that higher class people tend to read more books and magazines than the lower class, and that the former group tended to be more interested in 'serious' (such as *Time*) rather than 'light' (such as *True Confessions*) reading materials. Also the higher class people were found to attend church more frequently, belonged to more organizations, attend with greater frequency, and tend to more often hold office in those organizations (p.81). The author further added aspirations as another dimension in his study. With respect to this variable Reissman concluded that "the higher class is more realistic in its aspirations, as seen by its greater willingness to recognize the necessary steps for an upward occupational move. The lower class, on the other hand, shows a startling lack of ideals in this matter, part of which might be traced to a lesser degree of involvement in and knowledge of the affairs and social mechanisms of the community" (p.83). He states that with regard to involvement in policy matters, the higher class seems to show a greater willingness to be involved in community affairs and exercise leadership.

David Johnson's study (1983) looked at how editorial tone, communication potential, and utility determined magazine exposure and appraisal in India. Editorial tone reflects a reader's perceptions of the overall credibility and intentions of a medium; communication potential refers to an individual's perception of the manner in which information is presented (style,

comprehension); utility relates the characteristics of the medium directly to the needs of the individual. Hence, he suggests that media exposure will result from a combination of the needs of the receiver and the attributes of a message. Further, he along with researchers Judee K. Burgoon and Michael Burgoon concluded that age, income, education, race, marital status, and residence ownership are related to both newspaper and magazine use (1979, p.272). Johnson also adds that there are additional dimensions related to readership such as interest, usefulness, and importance for achieving one's goals. However, all these conclusions were based on a sample that only included elites in the Indian society.

The above study focused on how demographic and psychographic variables influence readership specifically and media consumption in general, and is among a slew of research that does the same. Christine D. Urban is in this category and she says that in addition to these two variables, situational or environmental variables are also a strong predictor of media behavior (1980, p.74). Her study provided a "conceptual and empirical look at the factors that influence media exposure, and that probably affect a reader's perception and selection of the magazine and the credibility and usefulness the reader attributes to it" (Urban, 1980, p.73). The researcher aimed to predict overall magazine readership utilizing consumer-descriptive variables such as demographics and behavioral-descriptive variables such as over-all media scores. She states that "heavy magazine consumers are more likely to have strong social 'needs to know' (which might stem from their upscale demographics) or that they bring to magazine readership an overriding print orientation that affects not only their quantity of magazine consumption, but the 'quality' of their involvement with the editorial and advertising material that they are reading" (p.77). Urban also concluded that women use the media differently. For example, men supposedly use television and magazines similarly, while women use them differently, for different purposes.

In conclusion, the above research seems to suggest that while men and women use the media differently to suit their needs, there are individual differences in the patterns of consumption as well. Hence, two people reading the same magazine may read it for different reasons and acquire different things from it as well. In addition, age, income, education, and social class are some of the factors that determine the way audiences consume magazines. It is also found that people who belong to higher classes of society tend to read more serious material than those at lower levels, and those who read 'heavy' materials have a strong need to know basis and also tend to get involved in issues that concern them.

The above articles which when applied to the present study helps explain why *Femina* caters to an elite audience. Factors like income, education and social class are pertinent to magazine consumerism in general, and with regards to *Femina* most of the readers tend to be English educated women and men who earn high incomes and are those who belong to the upper-middle and elite classes of society.

#### GROWING POPULARITY OF WOMEN'S MAGAZINES:

I'm sure that many of the editors of women's magazines might consider their publications to be feminist. My definition is not just the idea that women matter – which is where I think a lot of women's magazines stop – but that there is something called patriarchy and it has to be changed.

-- (Calvacca, 1994, p.1)

A number of studies have examined the growing popularity of women's magazines the world over (e.g. Winship, 1987; Ballaster, et al., 1991; Reed, 1991; Calvacca, 1994; Hermes, 1995; McRobbie, 1996; Greenfield & Reid, 1998; Talbot, 1998; Sakamoto, 1999; Shaw, 2000; Irene, 2004). All these studies concentrate to one degree or another on the relationship shared by women's magazines and Western society. The articles presented here first start with a brief look

at the evolution of women's magazines in Britain; the importance of *Woman's Own* in the history of magazines; how magazines were categorized; the impact of magazines in the late 1960s; and a look at the dominant analysis of these magazines as either sources of entertainment or as transmitters of oppressive ideologies. Furthermore, among these are studies done on developing societies and the impact of the global on local culture. The literature primarily includes studies done on British magazines, as at that time the Empire was extremely powerful and has thereby influenced life in all her colonies.

Mary M. Talbot provides a brief overview on the emergence of women's magazines in Western societies. First, the author says that the use of the term 'magazine' itself was not firmly established and hence other names such as "repository, museum and miscellany: for instance, *Christina Mother's Miscellany*, *Lady's Monthly Museum*, *Ladies' Fashionable Repository*" were commonly used (Talbot, 1998, p.177). Next Talbot looks into how the word 'magazine' came to be used: "before the word magazine took on its predominant modern meaning – as a particular kind of publication containing diverse elements – it used to refer to a place where miscellaneous things are kept, a storehouse. In this earlier meaning, incidentally, it is close to the French word 'magasin' that is still used for a large shop or department store" (p.177). According to Talbot, the very earliest magazines were journal-like publications that catered to an aristocratic readership and by the middle of the nineteenth century these magazines began to include middle-class people in Europe and North America. These magazines began to guide the aspiring middle-class, which included the wives and daughters of professional and business class people, on what they should buy, wear and how to further their dreams. There were features on fashion, reader's letters and responses, fiction and articles that explored women's role in the private sphere. These mid-nineteenth century publications thereby began catering to women who were

managing homes and hence there were pages that were also dedicated to recipes, knitting patterns and how to manage household servants (p.172). Thus, these magazines did not just offer tips on how to live lives but also sowed the seeds for “consumer femininity” (Talbot believes that magazines play a huge role in the commodification of femininity). They also played a role in shaping the fashion industry by bringing the latest fashion trends from Paris to women who lived elsewhere and by making high-end fashion widely available to all women (p.173).

Moreover, magazines not only had diverse elements and genres, but they also had many authors shaping their content and hence had multiple voices. Also in earlier magazines there was a heavy reliance on the audience to contribute mainly in the form of letters, stories, articles and verse. “Contributions were not paid and they appeared in print anonymously. However, they did place magazine readers as members of a community of writers and readers, rather than just as reader-consumers. In this respect, early magazines were similar to some modern ‘fanzies’ (amateur magazines produced by fans)” (p.177). Thus the author concludes that magazines have never been homogenous and diversity has been a key characteristic.

Jill Greenfield and Chris Reid continue Talbot’s research and they looked at the rise of *Woman’s Own*, one of the most important mass-circulations weekly magazines in the 1930s. The purpose of their work was to show that the “the launch of *Woman’s Own* in 1932 established the formulaic structure that characterized the genre, embodying the synthesis of commercial messages and representations of women’s roles that underpinned the genre’s success” (Greenfield & Reid, 1998, p.161). Their research shows that there was tremendous growth in the publishing industry between the years, 1918-1928, with 25 new women’s magazines appearing.

According to these authors the period between the two world wars saw the presence of a dominant ideology in most magazines in Britain. “The major tenets of this ideology were the

‘professionalization’ of housework through the utilization of labor-saving devices, ‘scientific’ motherhood, efficiency in the home, and the consumption of domestic goods by women” (Greenfield & Reid, 1998, p.162). *Good Housekeeping*, exemplifies this ideology as this was one of the first magazines launched in 1922 to promote the idea that housekeeping is a profession that requires planning. This magazine catered primarily to middle-class women who until then had servants and now after the war were finding it hard to do the work themselves. In this era there were four categories of magazines: “there were magazines read by the upper- and middle-class women; the monthly shilling magazines, aimed at middle-class women; sixpenny weeklies, which targeted lower middle-class and working-class women; and finally two penny mass-circulation weeklies read by working-class women” (Greenfield & Reid, 1998, p.165).

In this market *Woman’s Own* seemed to occupy a unique place as it departed from these traditional women’s magazines. This magazine was established in 1932 and it aimed at younger-to-middle aged women. *Woman’s Own* provided information in a less scientific approach and did so in a classless tone, thereby creating a template for future magazines. It also “blurred the lines between editorial and articles and commercial messages in its drive to engineer consumption” (Greenfield & Reid, 1998, p.172).

Janice Winship furthers the above research as she looks into women’s magazines since 1969 and in her work *Inside Women’s Magazines* she investigates the importance of British magazines (*Woman’s Own*, *Cosmopolitan* and *Spare Rib*) in the lives of the women who read them. The author debates with one of the feminist views that these magazines demean women and are solely produced for capital profits:

yet I continued to believe that it was as important to understand what women’s magazines were about as it was, say, to understand how sex discrimination operated in the workplace. I felt that to simply dismiss women’s magazines was also to dismiss the lives of millions of women who read and enjoyed them each week. -- (Winship, 1987, p. xiii)

However, just as important as Winship thinks it is to study women's magazines, she also feels that she is simultaneously attracted to them and rejects them. This author says that there are a number of women's magazines that pretend to promote and fight for women's equality and consequently these magazines further demote the status of women in society. She says that what women desire is to feel validated in the numerous roles that they play and women's magazines can help by creating these new images for womankind as a whole:

for example, we don't so much wish to throw off 'motherhood' as demand that it be assigned a worthier place in society's scale of tasks and values and that it be an option for men as well as women. Thus for feminists one important issue women's magazines can raise is how do we take over their feminine ground to create new and untrammelled images of and for ourselves?

-- (Winship, 1987, p. xiii).

In an attempt to understand why women's magazines were so popular, Winship suggested that one of the reasons might be due to the fact that in the past women were isolated from one another and had to find pleasure in a masculine culture. Women had priorities that were set for them and none of those tasks included taking care of themselves. Consequently, with the emergence of women's magazines a 'woman's world' was created within these pages where women not only existed, but there was a space/place where they meant something.

Women tend to be isolated from one another, gathering together briefly and in small huddles, stealing their pleasures in the interstices of masculine culture so graciously allowed them: family gatherings, rushed coffee mornings or the children's events, and the occasional night out with the 'girls.' The tasks they immerse themselves in, the priorities they believe in, constantly take second place to the concerns of men. In men's presence women are continually silenced, or they are ridiculed, scolded or humiliatingly ignored. Thus the 'woman's world' which women's magazines represent is created precisely because it does not exist outside their pages. In their isolation on the margins of the men's world, in their uneasiness about their feminine accomplishments, women need support - desperately. As Jane Reed, long-time editor of *Woman's Own* and then editor-in-chief of *Woman*, put it, 'a magazine is like a club. Its first function is to provide readers with a comfortable sense of community and pride in their identity'

-- (Winship, 1987, p.6).

Another interesting aspect that Winship brings forth is “how masculine wisdom mocks women’s magazines and belittles their readers” (Winship, 1987, p.7). She says that just as television soap operas are to news, similarly women’s magazines are the soaps of journalism. In addition these magazines are considered “schizophrenic” as they supposedly do not present their readers with a true and real picture.

While Winship provides a historical perspective on the changing content of women’s magazines in Britain, Angela McRobbie provides a feminist perspective on girl’s and women’s magazines such as *More* and *Marie Claire* among many others. One of the study’s aims was to show how most of these magazines focused on strong, frank and explicit sexual representations. “The use of humor and irony and the apparent lack of innocence on the part of the reader show that the sexual identities being constructed in these pages are complex and equal to that of men” (McRobbie, 1996, p.192). Moreover, it was found that the presentation of sexual related material was due to three specific factors: the need for information, suggesting that knowledge means power; public debates about safe sex especially due to HIV and AIDS; and due to the fact that sex sells and women want fantasy material in their magazines just as men. The author also suggests, “that these magazine-specific sexual representations must also be considered in relation to the intertextual sexual meanings which connect diverse media forms” (McRobbie, 1996, p.192). Readers as a result were invited to be actively involved with the magazines and in a sense had to admit that the pages were escapist and fun.

The author thereby concludes “magazines maintain their hold on women and girls as a privileged and pleasurable cultural space within which the female subject is actively produced while simultaneously being described and entertained” (McRobbie, 1996, p.193). She further

adds that these “magazines propagate a new meaning of women’s sexuality – one that is less naïve, more nuanced and more knowledgeable” (McRobbie, 1996, p.193).

However unlike the works of the above authors, there are those that feel women’s magazines do not truly empower women. Ros Ballaster, Margaret Beetham, Elizabeth Frazer and Sandra Hebron in their work, *Women’s Worlds – Ideology, Femininity and the Woman’s Magazine*, look into the two dominant analyses of women’s magazines. According to them, magazines are either seen as “bearers of pleasure or as purveyors of oppressive ideologies of sex, class and race difference” (Ballaster, et al., 1991, p.2). Thus according to them there exists a duality at the center of these magazines. “It is at the same time a medium for the sale of commodities to an identifiable market group, women and itself a commodity, a product sold in the capitalist market place for profit. It is also of course, a text, a set of images and representation which construct an imaginary world and an imaginary reader” (Ballaster, et al., 1991, p.2). Moreover, the other paradox that engulfs these magazines is the message that natural femininity can be achieved by a lot of hard work.

These authors also add that magazines have a history of prescribing definitions that embody the essence of a woman at that particular time in history in a particular culture. However, often times the women who read these pages can hardly relate to those who they read about. Nonetheless, magazines have to offer diverse identities so that they can reach and shape different women and thereby flourish. Hence these authors believe that “feminism can most effectively challenge gender difference as it is reified and fixed by women’s magazines throughout their centuries long existence” (Hermes, 1995, p.3).

Joke Hermes in her work incorporates the former research and says that there have been different magazine evaluations, some of which see magazines as a means of confining women to

their homes while others see it in a more promising light. Hermes's research attempted to look at the importance of these magazines from the reader's perspective. According to this author's research, women read these magazines not because of their content but because these magazines seemed to fit into their lifestyle and their obligations. "Women's magazines as a text are not highly significant, but as an everyday medium they are a means of filling a small break and of relaxing that does not interrupt one's schedule, because they are easy to put down. [...]. A second, less manifest aspect of reading them is that women's magazines offer material that may help you imagine a sense of control over your life by feeling prepared for tragedy, or a more perfect version of yourself by supposing that you would be able to answer any question regarding the difficult choices in life someone else might ask" (Hermes, 1995, p.144). The author concludes that features and practical tips offer women temporary empowerment.

All the above studies have looked into the emergence and analyzed the positive and negative effects of magazines on Western societies. Amidst this there has been research done by people from other societies as well. The following studies were chosen as the West influenced these societies and the authors look into how magazines affected life in those countries. Kazue Sakamoto studied two decades (1970s and 80s) of Japanese woman's magazines. The article looks into the changes in the lives of the women who lived in this time frame and analyzed the relation between those who experienced change and the magazines they read. Specifically the author looked into the emergence of three Japanese magazines for young, single women in the 1970s and explored the ways in which they reflected and reinforced changing attitudes among readers, encouraging new and subversive lifestyles and identities. The author found that while there was significant academic work done on women's magazines in Japan in other periods, there was very little research done on women's magazines in the 1970s (1999, p.173).

The 1970s was an important era in the lives of these women as they began to postpone getting married and pursued education and work. Magazines prior to the 1970s had audiences of various ages and regions. However, post 1970 magazines underwent a metamorphosis and displayed a new style, discussed new topics and catered to a specific audience (as women began to focus more on their careers than on getting married). The author says that these new magazines reflected the mind set of its readers and as a result some of the topics that were included in these pages were whether one should marry or not; the importance of a job in one's life; and the issue of freedom. Sakamoto also found that past academic literature done on women's magazines in Japan had failed to recognize the long standing desire for change among 'ordinary' Japanese women and therefore this article concludes that Japanese women's desire for freedom emerged from a combination of their own conscious desires and concerns and an awareness and influence by western feminism. Moreover, Sakamoto adds that women's magazines, which are quite often seen as tools for transmitting patriarchal ideals, can have a subversive edge to them and bring about a change in the lives of its readers, as exemplified by these magazines.

Similarly, Ping Shaw studied women's magazines in Taiwanese society and says that while scholars have paid considerable attention to women's magazines in Western societies, little attention has been paid to those in Third World countries (2000, p.153). This article asks whether traditional women's magazines would reflect the changing role of women in society. The author finds that the changing image of women in these magazines is class specific in this country. "*Woman*, the magazine with a middle-class audience, was more responsive to changes in women's roles, whereas representations of women in working-class magazines like *New Woman* remained more passive and traditional" (Shaw, 2000, p.158).

The study found that women's magazines in Taiwan were more sensitive to the changes in the lives of women than other media was. Shaw concludes that middle-class women's magazines appear to tread on a fine line between presenting messages for a liberated and traditional woman. Nonetheless, the author concludes that in general women's magazines do change to reflect the changing interest of their readers, even though the image and reality of women's roles depicted in these pages are far apart.

Fang-Chih Irene Yang adds to Shaw's research and studies the roles played by international women's magazines in the production of sexuality in Taiwan. "A magazine revolution took place in Taiwan during the late 1980s and early 1990s as corporate-based publishing companies such as China Times Publications began to introduce international women's magazines like *Cosmo*, *Elle*, and *Marie Claire*, thereby pushing out local individual- and family-owned magazine businesses such as *The Woman*" (Yang, 2004, p.505). Consequently, local magazines began to imitate these foreign magazines in both format and content. "The dominance of these international women's magazines in Taiwan's market has a significant bearing on feminists because as feminine popular culture, magazines play an important role in shaping women's identities. International women's magazines therefore constitute a significant site for exploring the interaction between the local and global dynamics in the domain of culture and how that dynamic is played out in the structuring of women's self-formation" (Yang, 2004, p.505).

The author says that both these local and international magazines shared their focus on sexuality and as a result magazines became "key sites in producing and defining the meanings of sexuality and therefore in structuring Taiwanese women's identities" (p.508). The articles therefore aimed to study the power relationships that were involved in the production of

women's sexuality in these pages. Yang clarifies why the topic of sexuality was focused on: "women's sexuality becomes the site of struggle in relation to global-local and patriarchal relations, with women as the subject of feminist empowerment in the form of politics of sexual liberation, and of disempowerment by targeting them for international brand-name commodities and a heterosexual framework of romantic longings" (Yang, 2004, p.515).

The author also points out that popular culture is a site of contradictions as women are told to conform to patriarchal norms and simultaneously bombarded with messages of empowerment. One of these messages was the democratization of sexuality articulated by and through international women's magazines. Moreover, these magazines came about in an environment that called for deregulation and globalization and as a result the female subject became a site of negotiation between local and global forces and feminist and patriarchal power. Yang therefore concluded that international women's magazines not only defined the meanings of local, global and international, but also operated through local social conditions. In this regard, there is a certain bias on the part of Western researchers in looking at the local as a patriarchal society while equating and promoting the West as modern and international.

Thus, all these articles starting with Talbot, trace the emergence of magazines and study its effect on societies, and amidst those that focus on the West are works that look into developing societies and how the global and the local interact to produce new female identities. The above research shows that the earliest magazines were created to cater an aristocratic audience and this class-based nature of readership has prevailed over culture and time. In the case of *Femina*, the magazine was formed to address the new English educated Indian woman. In addition, *Femina* like many other magazines invited its readers to respond and this helped create a community where readers are not assumed to be passive. Hence, *Femina* is more than

just a space or place where women converged; it was an arena where women were validated in the numerous roles that they play, a place of privilege and pleasure.

The above authors also suggest that magazines not only reflect the mind set of its readers, but it also plays a crucial role in shaping them as well. Hence when applied to the present study, *Femina* not only shapes the future of Indian women, but is also shaped by them. Therefore based on the above articles *Femina* like many other women's magazines is a club where women are provided with a sense of community and are given an opportunity to take pride in their identity.

#### SCHOLARSHIP ON THE HISTORY OF WOMEN'S MAGAZINES IN INDIA:

Examined in their historical context, however, these women's magazines were brave pioneers, expanding the frontiers of women's roles and consciousness at a time when those frontiers were severely limited.

-- (Minault, 1988, p.2)

There are a limited number of studies that have looked into the rise of women's magazines in India. Gail Minault looked into Urdu women's magazines in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. According to her "most early women's magazines, in a number of languages, championed women's education, condemned social customs that kept women subservient, and encouraged women's self expression" (Minault, 1988, p.2). However, the author notes that these magazines had a mixed legacy as they subscribed and promoted a women's right to education so that she could be an ideal companion to her husband and a nurturing mother to her children. Minault looks into three Urdu magazines: *Tahzib un-Niswan*, *Khatun* and *Ismat*.

*Tahzib un-Niswan* was launched in 1898 and the author says that while this was not the first Urdu periodical for women, it was definitely the first to survive (p.2). Sayyid Mumtaz Ali and his wife launched it for women. This weekly newspaper was initially mailed out free of cost and after a few months they began to get subscribers. Mumtaz Ali's motivation to cater to women was that he felt women occupied a much lower status than that as prescribed for them according to Islamic law and he wanted women to be aware of their rights, which included their right to property. "Further they needed to be aware of contemporary ideas concerning child rearing, health, nutrition, budgeting, etiquette, and so on" (Minault, 1988, p.3). Thus, he wanted this newspaper to educate and inform those women who observed 'parda' (system where women had to veil themselves and contain themselves at home, so that they wouldn't be seen by other men) so that they could be better wives, mothers, homemakers and more devout Muslims.

Mumtaz Ali, aided by his wife, presented articles that "discussed education, house-hold management, gave good advice to the daughter-in-law on how to get along with her mother-in-law, stressed on the need to eliminate wasteful expenditure on rituals, dowry, ornaments. It classified itself as a newspaper and so carried a lot of news items, notices of women's meeting, of fundraising drives for schools, and summaries of speeches by women to women's organizations" (Minault, 1988, p.4). In 1904 another couple, Shaikh Abdullah and Waheed Jahan Begam, started a magazine called *Khatun* for women. This journal looked into education, weighed the pros and cons of teaching women English, stressed the need for improved textbooks, talked about the need for fresh air and exercise among other things. "Khatun's purpose was to promote women's education. Providing women with useful household information, tips on childrearing, and embroidery patterns was left to publications closer to the style of *Tahzib*" (Minault, 1988, p.6).

*Ismat* was the third magazine founded in 1908 by Rashidul Khairi to promote women's education and respectable domesticity. This was primarily a literary journal that encouraged women to write creatively. However, this journal seemed to suggest that a woman's place was in the home. In conclusion, this article says that men who started these Urdu magazines aimed to bring about a few changes in the lives of women, but did so within the realm of patriarchy.

Mytheli Sreenivas extends the above research as she examines Tamil (a regional language) women's magazines published in colonial India from the 1890s to the 1940s and provides a brief historical account of the role magazines played in colonial society. The author says, "these magazines developed a paradigm of emotion in which discourse of love, affection, and pleasure prompted radical critiques of women's oppression" (Sreenivas, 2003, p.59).

According to Sreenivas, most prior studies concentrate on the opportunities magazines have created for writers and readers: "Gail Minault's study on Urdu magazines concluded that even though these magazines had limitations of access and ideology, they provided women with a space where their voices could be heard; Himani Bannerjee's study further added that women's magazines created a modern communicative space - a social, moral, and cultural space for and by women" (Sreenivas, 2003, p.60).

Using this background analysis Sreenivas studied those magazines that were part of an urban print culture in the southeastern city of Madras (Chennai). The author observes that while the content of the magazines during this period varied depending on the time frame, the common thread that linked them all was their critique of Tamil society that appealed to emotions.

Moreover, Sreenivas suggests that this particular print culture developed under the conditions of colonial modernity and therefore was heavily influenced by it. As a result, women's writing in this period redefined femininity and individuality. For example, during that period in time one

of the Tamil language magazines advocated widow remarriage, encouraged female education and called for a rejection of caste and kinship in choosing marriage partners. These themes among others were not just a challenge to patriarchy, but were also a revolt against colonialism. The author also concludes: “magazines at the time did not represent an existing women’s community, but shaped a female reading public according to the demands of ideology, politics, and the market for print” (Sreenivas, 2003, p.61). She also notes that the communicative space of the magazine was never exclusively female.

Vir Bharat Talwar looked into Hindi language women’s journals between the years 1910-1920. According to this author these journals aimed to bring about a feminist awareness to women at that time. Hence journals like “*Saraswati* and *Madhuri* carried descriptive accounts of women from other parts of the world complete with photographs” (Talwar, 1989, p.208). However amidst the numerous journals that were produced during this time, the author stresses on the roles played by three specifically: *Grihalakshmi*, *Stree Darpan* and *Chand*.

While all three promoted a women’s right to education and rallied an anti-imperialist sentiment, *Grihalakshmi* stressed more on the ideal relationship between a daughter-in-law and her mother-in-law, while the other two carried more articles on the injustices perpetuated on women. Additionally, *Chand* aimed to solve gender issues by calling out to the need for reforms and it also carried articles on the health of women and children. Another topic of concern at that time was the fact that widowers would marry three or four times and hence *Stree Darpan* wrote constantly criticizing this practice among men claiming this to be one of the reasons why women are seen as dispensable in society. In consequence these journals and magazines gave women a voice and represented the numerous issues that plagued their lives.

Another researcher K. Srilata in the book *Burning Down the House* carries on the torch of women's writings and examines women's magazines and the politics of modernity in India. She looks into the magazine *Woman's Era*, a fortnightly English-language magazine that caters to the middle-class Indian woman, and *Femina's* former competitor. K. Srilata says that this magazine had a wider audience as it was published in Hindi, the country's national language, and was cheaper than *Femina*. Also *Woman's Era* appealed more to the middle-class as it sold a different kind of modernity to its readers, "one that was unsubtly antifeminist and thereby accessible to its audience of lower-middle-class and middle-class housewives ages thirty to fifty" (K. Srilata, 1998, p.310). *Woman's Era's* construction of modern yet traditional women was inspired by the social reform movement wherein the "figure of woman was emancipated yet traditional, or, rather, emancipated enough to be trusted with tradition, family, children, and therefore the nation and its future has not vanished from the present" (K. Srilata, 1998, p.312). Furthermore, Srilata adds that the social reform movement did not affect the upper-class Indian woman, while the middle-class woman was still bound by the social reforms version of the modern woman and therefore she, like her nineteenth-century predecessors, had to take care of the home, her husband, children and in-laws and had to abide by community rules. The author claims that studying this magazine helps critically reflect on the portrayal of modern culture and that of progressive politics: "It is important to ask why women have had to bear the marks of tradition even in a world that has taken up with great passion the project of modernity, to ask why Barbie wears 'ethnicity' in wearing a sari while Ken does not, to question the modernity of feminism" (K. Srilata, 1998, p.323).

These studies suggest that a number of women's magazines in India were started by men at one time or were controlled by them. This explains why the content of most magazines in

colonial times and post-independence only talked about issues that related to a woman's identity as a wife, mother or daughter-in-law. However, despite all these limitations it gave women a space where they voiced their opinions and issues that troubled them were discussed.

Additionally, in India the class system plays an integral role in society. Therefore, many reforms that are meant to liberate women in the lower classes of society never reach them as patriarchy seems to have its strongest hold here.

The present study therefore will add to the past research done on women's magazine in India and will show how women's magazines today truly cater to the needs of the women.

#### PRIOR STUDIES ON *FEMINA*:

The present study owes its foundation to the article *Recipes for Change: Weekly Help for Indian Women* by Radha Sharma Hegde. Hegde's article explores exclusively the themes in the pages of *Femina* and analyzes prescriptions for women's identity. The author says that she chose to study this particular magazine not only because of its popularity, but also due to the fact that it connects people in a multilingual society. She claims that the readers of this magazine belong to the English-speaking, elite and influential segment of society and in "their personal space there is a mingling of the East and West which surfaces in *Femina's* content" (Hegde, 1995, p.178). Hegde randomly selected 19 issues of this magazine from 1988-1992 and content analyzed it for the preferred image of Indian women, the influence of traditional paradigms of femininity, and looked at the degree to which it embraced a new feminist consciousness. With this aim in mind she first cautions the reader that "popular culture representations of femininity can be understood only within the larger context of cultural attitudes about female sexuality and women's roles" (p.179).

In India, mythology and patriarchy play significant roles in shaping the lives of women. Society often times dictates, binds and recognizes a woman only in her roles as a wife and mother. It is in this context and within this frame that *Femina* had to operate. Hegde says that as a result women in India are caught in the crossfire of tradition, modernity, and westernization. Consequently, the magazine offers women some help: “*Femina*’s self-help advise offers recipes for a new female identity that blend mythological roots, colonial flavors, and Western, mainly American, packaging” (p.178). Furthermore, women are not only encouraged to question gendered hierarchies, but also urged to focus on themselves as individuals. The author thereby looks into three recurrent topics in these pages: “portrayals of the relational self, portrayals of the individualized self, and exemplars of womanhood” (p.181).

With regard to the first topic, Hegde defines the concept of relational self by saying that a “woman’s identity is entrenched in a network of social relationships as daughters, wives, and mothers” (p.181). In this sense, the author says that *Femina* acknowledges the changing times, articulates the needs of women, but yet conveys the message that women will feel fulfilled only when they abide by their conventional roles. Therefore, it is quite common to see articles that focus on women’s relation with their husbands and children; while simultaneously cautioning those who want to make their own decisions regarding marriage. The magazine as a result embraces a position that is uncritical of tradition and reinforces the patriarchal notion of what women have to be.

The next topic of the individual self is discussed in relation to femininity, independence and the notion of the superwoman. Here the magazine is noted to simultaneously empathize with those women who lack the autonomy to make choices, while it declares that being a single woman in India is an abnormality. *Femina* is seen to waver in the way it treats those women

who search for their independent identity. Hegde says that sometimes the magazine applauds those women who challenge norms and at other times it criticizes those who want to bring about a wrinkle in the social fabric. Therefore, the magazine is accused of exposing the contradictions that define the life of the Indian woman, but does not offer her any suggestions on how to manage those contradictions. The author finds it “ironic that the magazine would question the marginalization of women’s professional success, but ultimately concludes by blaming the women for being oppressed” (p.184).

The final topic, exemplars of womanhood, concentrates on the myth of the superwoman. These are women who are profiled as achievers and are often times depicted as those who do not have conflicts with tradition. Hegde says that the magazine’s concept of the superwoman is aimed to not only applaud those women who are enterprising and have succeeded in male dominated areas, but to also set an example for others to emulate. Interestingly, these superwomen are women who are married or intend to marry.

The author therefore claims that “this magazine is an agent of change as it raises some degree of consciousness regarding women’s roles” (p.185). However, it hesitates to encourage Indian women to completely embrace their individuality and counsels them to abide by traditions. Throughout this article the author presents her hesitations about *Femina*:

It should be noted that *Femina* does feature serious articles on sex roles, women’s rights over ancestral property, violence against women, housing for women, and the traumas associated with being childless. In this sense, the magazine empathizes with real dilemmas Indian women face in their lives. In the end, however, *Femina* neither excites nor creates ripples. Instead with soft complaints and a marked deference to the patriarchal order, *Femina* engages in delicate chit-chat about stability and change.

-- (Hegde, 1995, p.187).

The magazine as a result promotes awareness among women on the one hand, while simultaneously instructing women to be cautious and not abandon tradition, thereby “promoting

a balance between patriarchal norms and assertiveness” (p.177). Moreover, Hegde also says that the magazine often associates modernity with the West and this is a dangerous path to tread on, as images of westernized autonomy are so remote from the average woman’s social and economic experience.

Susan Parulekar in her study on *Femina* adds another fold to the current research as she examines the ways by which the magazine portrays the image of elite women. According to Parulekar, *Femina* serves as a space where women’s identity can be negotiated in the light of globalization: “*Femina* magazine can be seen as such an imagined community, as it is part of a larger dialogue between what Fox describes as the fuzziness of ‘how people conceive of themselves or are conceived of by others, and how people live out and live with these conceptions’” (Parulekar, 2001, p.3). Moreover, the author sees the magazine as an imagined community where elite women negotiate their own global and local identities, as they read the pages of this magazine. She also refers to *Femina* as a mediascape, which refers to the movement of global media in its various forms throughout the world, and an ideoscape, which is constituted by certain sets of ideas. Via a discourse analysis, Parulekar writes about interesting trends in fashion, commodity fetishisms, and topics of discussion that dominate these pages.

The author studied the changing image of women in this magazine, the types of commodities advertised in the issues and said, “the fashion magazine can serve as a site in which identity is negotiated in light of forces of globalization” (p.4). Additionally, “from its inception in the 1950s, *Femina* has always been informed, albeit implicitly, by transnational flows of global culture and individuals, the South Asian diaspora, the media and language and politics” (Parulekar, 2001, p.3). She looked into how the facets of eliteness – space, beauty and lifestyle – changed with each decade and concluded that there was an interplay between global and local

cultures. According to her, economic policy, the diaspora, media, and language politics influence the magazine and the image of the woman that it depicts. To exemplify this she looks into the way advertisements are presented in the pages. In one specific ad, a photograph of a young woman wearing shorts and a tank top is shown crafting a sculpture (an unusual hobby that is constructed as international) and the product being advertised is a hair removal cream. Thus, Parulekar concludes that the magazine was a small world altered by globalization to create a community of women.

The above research concludes that *Femina* caters to an elite class of women in India, those women who are economically self-sufficient and those who reside primarily in metropolitan cities. The location of these readers is important as cities witness the most rapid changes and provide women with access to resources. Moreover, these women exist in an imaginary society that is created through these pages. In this society women are sexually liberated and by virtue of their discussions they want to create a society where women will be acknowledged for their roles as mothers and wives; will be given ample opportunity to invade male dominated areas of work; and will be given freedom to express her mind and own her body.

The present study is based on these two studies and hopes to build and add to it. Like the above two articles this study agrees that *Femina* caters to elite audience, but additionally it views the magazine as a tool that helps re-define and defend the various identities that Indian women assume.

## OVERVIEW OF THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT IN INDIA:

Women's rights are actually related to (a) primarily the issue of patriarchy, reinforced by culture, religion and literature etc., and (b) subsequently, the rights of women may get further curtailed by the boosting factors like communalism and fundamentalism.

-- (Sethi, 1999, p.325).

Feminism is a liberating ideology that is more concerned with the fight against mental slavery than against the physical disabilities.

-- (Sethi, 1999, p.328).

The political climate in India with specific relation to the women's movement is traced by Raj Mohini Sethi in *Globalization, Culture and Women's Development*. Sethi traces the beginnings of the women's movement to the religious movements of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries - Bhakti, Sant and Sufi movements. The Bhakti movement saw works by women like Mirabai who in her biography says that she broke away from the norms of marriage and widowhood and chose the path of asceticism. Sethi adds, "in spite of this rebellion, the language that she chooses favors the maintenance of status quo than alterity" (Sethi, 1999, p.335). Another philosopher at that time was Kabir who through his teaching wanted to bring about an egalitarian concept of the body, soul, mind and creation. "He also contested religious orthodox ritual and caste-based discriminations. However, he too upheld patriarchal values" (Sethi, 1999, p.335). Guru Nanak's philosophy on the other hand, which was part of the Sant tradition, was more liberal and he had great appreciation for women's householder position. Thus, during this era women's issues were discussed within the patriarchal realm and they were given a limited space within which they had to exist.

In addition, this period was also marked by the dwindling of the Mughal Empire and saw a prevalence of practices such as caste system, untouchability, child marriages, polygamy, prohibition on widow remarriages, sati (a practice that demanded widows to be burnt on the

funeral pyres along with their husbands) and purdah. These oppressive conditions led to the emergence of new movements to better women's lives, but unfortunately none left any significant mark on society.

The arrival of the East India Company in the nineteenth century is credited with sowing the seeds for a conscious women's movement. Sethi says that the interaction between the colonial rulers and the Indians led to two significant developments: the birth of a new social class called the gentry (merchants, money lenders, tax collectors) and the emergence of new consciousness that differentiated the western rulers from the natives. Furthermore, the constant interaction between the two worlds forced the concept of social egalitarianism that had just arrived in the western world to trickle down to India. As a result, a new conscious ethos arose in Indian society that began to target all the anti-women social practices such as female infanticide and sati among others. Western educated Indian men who were also a consequence of colonialism began to not just revolt against their invaders but also began to launch a social reform movement to liberate their own women. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was one of those western educated men who fought for the abolition of sati in 1815. Moreover, reformists also aimed to educate women, and fought to end child marriages. Women were responsible for the socialization of children and therefore great emphasis was placed on the woman's role in the family.

In addition, nationalism and revivalism contributed to the development of the women's movement in the nineteenth century. Revivalists were extremely eager to get rid of the colonial rulers and hence they wanted to create a new identity for women; an identity that was bound by cultural traditions. Also during this time frame, the British advocated liberating Indian women from barbaric Hindu practices and to counter these charges, nationalists positioned women as the

center of India's morality and glorified her role as mother and wife. "The major aim of the revivalists, however, was not to transform the existing gender relations but to counter the virulent attack on Indian culture by the British" (Sethi, 1999, p.339). Thus, during this period women were encouraged to get educated so that society would have a new gender consciousness. However, the new image of the woman was tied to her roles as wife, mother and housekeeper, thereby allowing patriarchy and hierarchy to be the new dictator. Therefore the nineteenth century and early twentieth century gave Indian women liberal and egalitarian consciousness, but did not liberate them from men's authority.

The beginning of the twentieth century saw further changes as the emerging liberal and egalitarian consciousness and its emphasis on women's education led to women grabbing opportunities in literary and professional fields. The sprouting of reform movements like the Brahma Samaj and Arya Samaj encouraged women preachers and professionals and the Indian National Movement established various women's associations and emphasized the importance of self-reliance and education. Thus, with this increasing political consciousness women wanted to redefine the private-public dichotomy. Women were until then confined to the four walls of their homes and now with the nationalist movement, they were encouraged to work outside of that realm, thereby creating a new space for themselves. Sarojini Naidu is one of the pioneers of the women's movement and she encouraged women to join the freedom struggle. Women's organizations such as the Home Rule League by Annie Besant and the Women's India Association at the national and regional levels paved the way for a new feminist consciousness and activism. "The activities of these organizations and the protests raised by them were centered around the issue of women's education, their right to suffrage, improvements in health and sanitation, maternity benefits for women workers, skill formation for income generation and

the Sarada Bill” (Sethi, 1999, p.343). Thus, women’s involvement in the freedom struggle encouraged many middle class women to break free and benefit from the new concept of gender equality.

Nonetheless, despite all the progress made by women in entering the public domain they were still only being credited for their role as mother more than that as wage earner. Hence, women’s movement until this point was a concoction of reformism, revivalism and nationalism.

The period after independence until the 1970s was aimed at removing all forms of gender inequalities and during this time men were in charge of liberating women from their traditional roles. Thus, “the task of social reconstruction was undertaken after independence” (Sethi, 1999, p.344). A sub-committee was appointed in 1939 to look into various aspects of women’s role and the committee submitted a report in 1947. “It recommended the development of women as individuals and economic independence was considered necessary to the goal. Further, it suggested the importance of legal rights for the attainment of gender equality” (Sethi, 1999, p.344).

However, the passing of such bills and the institution of laws was a far dream. Jawahar Lal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi wanted women to join the freedom struggle as individuals and not as women, as they did not think that gender was a major issue. But, this hope was crushed as legislative attempts to bring about gender equality were constantly being surrounded by controversies. “In the absence of consensus and mobilization of women most enactments under the Hindu Marriage Act, the Hindu Succession Act, and the Dowry Act remained a dream for the ordinary woman. On the contrary, because of the opposition by the orthodox elements, most legislations were enacted in a half-hearted manner. Even the sub-committee’s report was thrown into cold storage and was forgotten till recently” (Sethi, 1999, p.345). Thus it was in this

environment that one of the first major legislative initiatives, the Hindu Code Bill, “which sought to create a uniform law ensuring women some rights to property and succession and treating them as equal to men in relation to marriage and divorce” was delayed for three years and finally a modified version was passed in 1955 (Tharu & Lalita, 1990, p.46). Also in 1951 the first elections that were held in a free India were based on universal suffrage.

During this period the existence of the economic class system and the sex-class system gave birth to the rise of socialist feminists. Thus, Indian women who found themselves in different sociocultural and historical locations from women elsewhere formulated their own relation to feminism (Mohanty, 2003, p.49). “Feminists around this time comprised a fragmented melee of diverse cultures and ideologies and their goals became quite ambiguous. As a result, the movement suffered a serious set-back and the fifties and sixties was period of relative lull in history” (Sethi, 1999, p.345). One peculiar feature of the women’s movement until this period was that it was often times not initiated by women themselves.

The biggest thrust to the women’s movement was provided by the rise of autonomous women’s groups all over the nation after the mid-seventies. Nearly all of these groups had common aims: they challenged patriarchal values and brought out debates on issues that concern them. Further, events like violence against women and dowry deaths propelled and gave women’s movement a new direction. Women thereby organized protests and marches and set up counseling centers and support services. The visibility of these protests brought forth an awareness of the loopholes in laws relating to cases of dowry and rape, and consequently changes in these laws were introduced. “However one of the inherent dangers in espousing the cause of women as only a women’s issue was that it failed to assume the shape of a mass movement. Thus a new realization emerged among the feminists: the new realization was that

women's movement cannot stand in isolation from the general democratic processes ideology as well as organizationally. Women's issues have to be woven within the broad framework of democratic issues within the economic, political or social spheres" (Sethi, p.350).

Nisha Garg and Pradeep Kumar add to Sethi's work and they trace feminism and its various forms in India. Garg and Kumar say that radical feminism, which includes male bashing, was dominant in the late 1970s. The neo-feminist version of the women's movement aimed to authenticate feminism by liberating it from the clutches of masculinism and hoped to feminize it. Nonetheless, regardless of the nature of the movement, the authors claim that the leadership that guides it tends to be urban and upper class or elite women. Thus the elite nature of the leadership is often times held responsible for not being able to read or understand the true needs of the lower class women. The other problem that the woman's movement has faced is that many women feel that they have been indoctrinated and socialized in the patriarchal value system and hence they find it nearly impossible to rise against the system. Nonetheless, Garg and Kumar feel that empowering women begins with literacy and poverty alleviation.

Urvashi Bhutalia continues where the above researchers left off and she says that one of the biggest challenges women have had to face in recent years is the growing religious influence in the nation. "Right-wing groups have built much of their support on the involvement of women: offering to help them with domestic problems, enabling them to enter the public space in a limited way, and all the while ensuring that the overall ideology within which they operate remains firmly patriarchal. For activists too, this has posed major problems. It has forced them to confront the fact that they cannot assume a solidarity as women that cuts across class, religion, caste, ethnic difference" (Bhutalia, 1997, p.4). However, the promising feature in the present

picture is the introduction of 33 percent reservation for women in local and village-level elections.

Thus, women's movement in India is not one single cohesive movement, but is made up of a number of fragmented campaigns. Moreover, it is also one where men have historically been very involved and continue to be involved with.

The above research helps understand why *Femina*, a magazine with a pro-feminist stance caters to men as well. The above authors suggest that in the sub-continent men have always been involved in the women's movement and hence *Femina* wants to cater to men as well, in an attempt to further bridge the gap between the two sexes.

#### WRITING AS AN IDEOLOGICAL TOOL:

While women's movement in India continues to be talked and written about, it is important to look at who does the talking and writing. For a very long time Western researchers have talked about liberating women from Third World oppressive societies. However, what this research does is look at developing societies from a Western perspective and thereby 'other' them in the process. The following studies are done by researchers who come from developing societies and who therefore feel the need to represent themselves.

Teresa de Lauretis in the book *Alice Doesn't* looks into the ignored arena of writing and says, "strategies of writing and of reading are forms of cultural resistance" (1995, p.7). She says with specific regard to feminist works that writing opens up a space where women's ideal representations can be challenged and thereby be re-created. Interestingly, women have to contest the way both men and 'other' women write about them. For example, Western feminists usually talk about women in the Third World as being oppressed and portray them as victims of

patriarchy. Hence, women in these regions need to write about themselves to change the stereotypical images.

Works by Mohanty and Abu-Lughod exemplify Lauretis's statement. Lila Abu-Lughod in *Writing Women's Worlds* writes about women in a small Bedouin community in Egypt and she stresses that these women's stories are made up of conversations, narratives, arguments, songs, and reminiscences among other things (1993, p.1). The author examines her writing and asks if there is something such as a woman's voice and if there is any specific thing as 'woman's style.' Abu-Lughod looks into feminist writing and says that women can be feminist and researchers and that being feminist would give one a heightened consciousness of standpoint (the way women experience and tell their stories) and power dynamics of self and other.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty's work, *Feminism Without Borders*, is yet another example of a woman's voice and woman's writing. Mohanty chooses the above title for her work as she felt that an "inclusive vision of feminism must be attentive to borders while learning to transcend them as well: borders suggest both containment and safety, and women often pay a price for daring to claim the integrity, security, and safety of our bodies and our living spaces" (Mohanty, 2003, p.2).

Radhika Parameswaran in her study bases her work on Mohanty and explores the production of "third world women in Western feminist discourse as victims of oppressive systems" and Parameswaran thereby exemplifies the need for women to write about themselves (Parameswaran, 1996, p.69). The author, in this attempt, looks at the way the *Dallas Observer* covers a case of bride burning. The *Dallas Observer* constructed Aleyamma Mathew's (a member of the Indian diaspora) burning as the 'other' and said that it was a consequence of the oppression that rises from Indian culture and tradition. The author points out that when the

media chooses to cover such events that relate to minority communities, it propels stereotypical images and notions. Parameswaran cites the work of Peter Dahlgren and Sumitra Chakrapani: “incessant glimpses of disorder and violence serve as a reminder that these societies continue to act out their essential character; they are virtually driven by violence. ‘We’ on the other hand, the industrialized West, are typified by order and stability, a higher form of civilization. Devoid of social, political, and historical causation, the manifestations of disorder and violence take on the quality of eternal essences, which define the nature of these countries. ‘That’s just the way they are’” (Parameswaran, 1996, p.69).

Parameswaran adds to this and says that it is essential to critique the way the media represents the non-Western cultures because in addition to stereotyping, the media contributes to producing and creating the knowledge about these cultures. “The problems with media representations of India or Indians in the United States media are undoubtedly influenced by Western perceptions of India acquired through mainstream media representations. A study of representation of India in the United States print media, conducted in Bloomington, Indiana, shows that in *The New York Times*, *Time*, *National Geographic*, *The Economist*, and local Bloomington papers, three themes dominated: ‘India as over-populated and impoverished, India as exotic and primitive, and India as a land of turmoil’” (Parameswaran, 1996, p.70).

It is due to this process of ‘exoticization’ and ‘othering’ that scholars in India felt the need to represent themselves and clarify the way the world sees them. As a result, feminist scholars in India began to write to represent themselves. According to Mohanty, “without the overdetermined discourse that creates the third world, there would be no (singular and privileged) first world. Without the ‘third world woman,’ the particular self-presentation of

Western women as secular, liberated, having control of their lives would be problematic. I am suggesting, then, that the one enables and sustains the other” (Parameswaran, 1996, p.70).

Aihwa Ong looks at how feminists represent women in non-Western societies.

According to Ong the irony of feminism is twofold: first that it is a subculture that is produced within the West and how the West relates or looks at people elsewhere and second, Western feminists want to be the authority on non-Western women based on the former’s sense of what the world must be. Thus, the author hopes to explain how colonial discourse intersects with feminist representations of non-Western women. Ong defines colonial discourse as “different strategies of description and understanding, which were produced out of the historical emergence of transnational network of power relations” (Ong, 1998, p.80).

The article quotes a number of recent studies are responsible for producing epistemological and political gaps between feminists and the ‘oppressed women.’ In this sense, it is quite common for researchers to term women from different or other cultures as ‘exotic.’ Furthermore, Western feminists gauge the status of non-Western women based on legal, social and political benchmarks that the former considers critical. Additionally a number of feminists use a traditional/modernity framework or look at the patriarchal conditions that dominate society when they evaluate the non-Western woman. When the first framework is used, the non-Western woman is usually seen as nonmodern or modern by ignoring the social setting where these women live. Thus, the non-Western woman is taken out of her society and then evaluated according to Western standards of life.

Ong says that “by portraying women in non-Western societies as identical and interchangeable, and more exploited than women in the dominant capitalist societies, liberal and socialist feminists alike encode a belief in their own cultural superiority. On the one hand, we

have a set of Western standards whereby feminists and other scholars evaluate the degree of patriarchal oppression inflicted on women as wives, mothers, and workers in the Third World. [...]. On the other hand, feminist approaches which purport to understand indigenous traditions and meanings that have persisted over the course of modernization often betray a view of non-Western women as out of time with the West, and therefore a vehicle for misplaced Western nostalgia” (Ong, 1998, p.84). Thus when these feminists portray a whole society of women as oppressed and backward, their works become part of “Western academic and policy-making discourses on the backwardness of the non-Western, non-modern world” (p. 84).

The author also states that the second problem with Western discourse is that they proceed in reversal: “they usually say that non-Western women are what we are not” (p.86). Ong, however, does agree that these Western feminists must speak on behalf of their counterparts from elsewhere, but these representations must not be doused in sympathy for the non-Western woman. Consequently, a solution to be free from stereotypical portrayals would be giving up the traditional ways by which the West tends to look at the non-West. “By giving up our accustomed ways of looking at non-Western women, we may begin to understand better. We may come to accept their living according to their own cultural interpretations of a changing world, and not simply acted upon by inherited traditions and modernization projects. [...]. Edward Said has suggested that a new way of transnational solidarity is not through assimilating the Rest into a common unity, but by renouncing our utopian, libertarian vision” (Ong, 1998, p.88).

Another study by Parameswaran, adds to the work by other postcolonial feminists who challenge the depiction of Third World women as passive victims of a patriarchal society (Mani, 1991; Mohanty, 1991; Kumar, 1994; Visweswaran, 1994; Ong, 1998). Parameswaran looks into

the implication on society when young middle-class women in urban India read Western romance fiction and concluded that these women were not passively accepting patriarchal constructions of ideal femininity and sexuality. These women resisted by partially accepting patriarchal norms. The motivation for this study was to pay attention to the politics of representation of audiences in media studies and the “article reflects on the failures, successes, and dilemmas experienced during the research process to show that feminist media ethnographies are embedded within the discourse of power” (Parameswaran, 2001, p.69). While doing research Parameswaran looks into and distinguishes between the categories of self/other, native/Western, and insider/outsider and she concludes by stressing on the need for Third World scholars to carry out and study their own cultures rather than being studied all the time: “the entry of postcolonial scholars from the Third World in the U.S. academy as scholars and ethnographers studying their own cultures rather than as the traditional ‘objects’ of research has been heralded as a major transformation in the history of Euramerican academic knowledge production” (Parameswaran, 2001, p.93).

The author also suggests another way to challenge the paradigm of Western self/non-Western other would be for Third World scholars to study First World cultures. Meenakshi Gigi Durham adds to this in her study of the symbols of South Asian femininity in the U.S. media culture. Durham looks at the way U.S. fashion appropriate South Asian symbols of femininity like the nose ring, mehendi and bindis. These symbols are popularized by media icons like Madonna and Gwen Steffani of the group No Doubt. “The analysis showed that the contemporary ‘ethnic chic’ preserves power hierarchies by locating the White woman as sexual object, and the Indian woman as the disembodied fetish that supports White female sexuality” (Durham, 2001, p.201).

Rehana Ghadially in *Women in Indian Society* examines Indian feminism and says, “unlike Western women, Indian women’s identity is deeply embedded not just in the marital twosome, but in the entire family, caste, class and community. [...]. It is precisely this rootedness that has made it impossible for even Indian feminists to seriously challenge the family as the single-most oppressive institution” (Ghadially, 1998, p.16). Indian women have had to play the role of paragons of virtue for centuries and have had to fit a particular mold. It is precisely due to this subjugation that writing among women became a political activity rather than an aesthetic one.

Rajeswari Sunder Rajan in *Real and Imagined Women* draws attention to the fact that societies of women creates their own feminism thereby showing that there is no such thing as pure feminism. Therefore, to analyze a society from a Western perspective would be disastrous. “The activity of reading ‘under western eyes’ becomes a fraught and almost disabling self-conscious exercise” (Rajan, 1993, p.2). Rajan however realizes the need for such work and says that collaborating with western feminists acknowledges the similarity in political motivation between themselves and the others and also stresses the differences in questions that these two groups face. Furthermore, she adds that in most postcolonial states there is always a struggle between tradition and modernity and this has a greater impact on women than on men in these societies (p.6).

These books and articles therefore play an integral role in not just the women’s movement, but also helps bridge and correct the gap in scholarship.

What this study therefore hopes to achieve is continue in the path of those Indian researchers who study their own cultures, in an attempt to bridge the gap between Western and Eastern perspectives.

GLOBALIZATION MAKES AN INTRODUCTION:

Globalization is best considered as a complex set of interacting and often countervailing human, material, and symbolic flows that lead to diverse, heterogeneous cultural positionings and practices which persistently and variously modify established vectors of social, political and cultural power.

-- (Lull, 2000, p.238)

The debate and discussions involving globalization are pervasive and Nobel Prize Winner in Economics, Amartya Sen argues that both the East and the West can claim the origins of globalization. “The agents of globalization are neither European nor exclusively Western, nor are they necessarily linked to Western dominance. Indeed, Europe would have been a lot poorer — economically, culturally and scientifically — had it resisted the globalization of mathematics, science and technology at that time. And today, the same principle applies, though in the reverse direction (from West to East)” (Sen, 2002). She says that even though the Renaissance, Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution took place in Europe and North America, many of these developments were based on the experiences from the rest of the world. Similarly, the author says “the first printed book was an Indian Sanskrit treatise, translated into Chinese by a half-Turk. The book, Vajracchedika Prajnaparamitasutra (sometimes referred to as ‘The Diamond Sutra’), is an old treatise on Buddhism. It was translated into Chinese from Sanskrit in the fifth century by Kumarajiva, a half-Indian and half-Turkish scholar who lived in a part of eastern Turkistan called Kucha but later migrated to China. It was printed four centuries later, in 868 A.D. All this involving China, Turkey, and India is globalization, all right. But the West is not even in sight” (Sen, 2002). Thus it is important for the West and the East to realize that globalization is a process of exchange, not just of ideas and goods, but also of practices and identities.

In the late 1980s India was on the path of liberalization and economic reforms. New economic policies of liberalization were initiated in the 1990s and India became an open free market economy. The sub-continent opened itself to multinational firms, technological changes, and was soon flooded with Barbie dolls, McDonalds, MTV, and Coca-Cola among many other products. Thus in India Barbie wears sari, McDonald offers the Maharaja Mac and ‘Kaun Banega Karorpati’ is the Hindi version of ‘Who wants to be a millionaire?’

Programs like the Hindi version of ‘Who wants to be a millionaire?’ could be ushered into the nation as television and its related technology changed rapidly. “Indian television changed from a government broadcast monopoly to a rapidly expanding selection of satellite services that now draw large audiences in major cities and in most large towns across the country” (Kumar and Curtin, 2002, p.352). Soon satellite services were available to about 25 million people and cable systems in cities like Mumbai featured more than three dozen channels; thus bringing in worlds that are oceans apart into the homes of these people. Nevertheless, with globalization came about a whole new set of issues for Indian women who now had to deal with a global culture.

There are a number of studies on globalization and its far-reaching consequences on society (Hall, 1991; Breckenridge, 1995; Hegde, 1998; Tomlinson, 1999; Fernandes, 2000; Lull, 2000; Appadurai, 2001; Chaudhuri, 2001; Durham, 2001; Kumar, Curtin, 2002; Parmeswaran 2001; 2002; Mohanty, 2003).

Stuart Hall in *The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity* looks into the debate around globalization in relation to culture and cultural politics. According to Hall the new globalization is American, not English, and he lists several characteristics of global mass culture. The first of which is that it is centered in the West; thus capital, techniques and labor

among other things are concentrated in the West and they provide the impetus to drive a global mass culture. The second characteristic states that 'it is a homogenization form of cultural presentation' based on which globalization absorbs local cultures and operates with them and by their side. Therefore, globalization has to incorporate and reflect the differences it was trying to overcome in the local culture.

Hall also believes that sometimes people return or more firmly embrace the local culture when they feel they can't understand or relate to the global. "The return to the local is often a response to globalization. It is what people do when, in the face of a particular form of modernity which confronts them in the form of the globalization I have described, they opt out of that and say 'I don't know anything about that anymore'" (Hall, 1991, p.34). In addition, the local can be seen as a space in the margin that embodies ethnicities. Now when this space interacts with the global space then it produces new identities and new ethnicities. Hence identity is a process of representation, which is constantly evolving and never complete. Moreover, identities can be worked on by outside forces like politics and economics. Collective social identities of class, race and sex have long been stabilized and shaped by historical processes such as industrialization, capitalism, urbanization and now globalization. To this discussion of identities the author talks about the 'politics of living identity through difference:' "It is the politics of recognizing that all of us are composed of multiple social identities, not of one" (Hall, 1991, p.57). These identities are therefore shaped by the local and global, which can be seen as prisms for looking at the same thing.

Carol Breckenridge builds on the above research. She analyzed public modernity in India and said, "every society today has the means to produce a local modernity and as members of a society travel and traverse the globe the modernity that was once associated with America and

Europe is no longer pristine” (Breckenridge, 1995, p.1). The author adds that with modernity, consumption becomes a social activity and thereby expenditure creates new identities. “In India there have been notable patterns of consumption, recreation and entertainment that resemble cosmopolitan cultural forms in other parts of the world” (Breckenridge, 1995, p.6). In addition to this booming public culture there was an explosion in the media market and in technology. Thus, even though modernity is experienced in a local area, the area itself has undergone rapid transformations in a global climate. Moreover, the author claims that with the spread of the electronic media, flow of resources, images and persons across borders, imagination has emerged as a new force in social life (p.14).

Few students of global modernities would deny that the media (in particular the electronic media) have transformed the meaning of locality by creating complex images of distance, self, other, and social transformation that extend to the remotest societies of the world the capability to construct imagined worlds. [...]. Thus India is a locality, but it is better described as a ‘site’ or a spatial vortex, which complex historical processes come into conjunction with global processes that link such sites together.

-- (Breckenridge, 1995, p.15)

Therefore, Breckenridge sees modernity as an interactive process that is made possible by globalization and she sees societies as locations of negotiations between history and globality.

“Globalization lies at the heart of modern culture; cultural practices lie at the heart of globalization” says John Tomlinson of the reciprocal relationship between the two (1999, p.1).

He adds that globalization is important and often seen as opposing to culture as the latter denotes a fixed locality where particular meaning is constructed. Therefore globalization is a force, which often alters this sociocultural landscape. Tomlinson also adds that globalization signals an interdependency and interconnection of all the global areas, which is brought about by economic and cultural practices (1991, p.175). Thus globalization is seen as a disorganized process with

unintended consequences. Moreover, this process creates a new cultural space where people have local experiences that are shaped by global processes.

Radha Sharma Hegde furthers this thought as she says that as a consequence of interaction between the global and local, communities reorganize, become more fluid and they also become spaces of struggle: “not only are cultural borders becoming amorphous, but people are also increasingly engaged in this transnational flow of action. The West and the non-West are not discrete entities, but rather, have shaped and been shaped by one another in specific and specifiable ways” (Hegde, 1998, p.285). Therefore as economies and cultures circulate, so do identities. Moreover Hegde adds that globalization urges self-reflection as it introduces new issues and challenges.

The rhetoric of globalization heralded in new notions of identity for Indian women as well. This is the focus of the study done by Maitrayee Chaudhuri (2001) who looked at gender and advertisements in a new global India and concluded that the onset of liberalization had brought in new values to the Indian society. According to Chaudhuri, globalization brought about a break in the traditional model of Indian women as homemaker and mother and advertisements now portrayed her as a globe trotting corporate leader. She credits this new image of corporate women with the entry of a large number of transnational companies into India. The myriad number of beauty pageants brought about another facet to a woman’s image. Thus, the new Indian woman is one who knows to dare and dream; someone who is old fashioned enough to care and new enough to speak her mind. With regard to men, she found that the even though the image of man as high achiever was still at the forefront, there was a new dimension added to his personality. The new image of man was projected as that of a ‘complete

man,' one who is caring, tender and endowed with feminine ethos. Hence liberalization gave rise to a new Indian, one who is global and cosmopolitan.

Therefore the above research suggest that globalization provided and continues to provide the impetus whereby a heterogeneous group of women organize themselves to create a space, the pages of *Femina*, for themselves in society, and in this space or social sphere they create many different identities for themselves. Additionally, globalization is a process of exchange of ideas, of goods and identities.

### CHAPTER 3

#### THEORY AND METHOD

Theory is always a detour on the way to something more important.  
--Stuart Hall

There are quite a few theories that could help in an analysis of the construction of multiple identities in the pages of *Femina*. For example, *Femina* can be seen as an institution that is created by women to advance their cause in society and the cultural model of communication could be employed to say that this magazine creates a common space for Indian women to bind together; it is a cultural landscape. However, this is an overarching view that does not explain other factors that play into it, like the need for Indian women to create their own space where they can defend, reinvent and create new identities for themselves, or the importance and relevance of a global culture on a metropolitan society from where *Femina* operates.

Another theory, scattered hegemonies explores the possibilities of doing feminist work across cultural divides without ignoring differences or falling into cultural relativism. This theory which helps researchers like K. Srilata break down the 'Traditional/Indian and Modern/Western' binary as a mutually permeable category can also be used in this study. While this term may help resolve some of the stereotypes that of associating modernity with the West; it still does not fit well in this study.

The multiple modernities thesis is defined as: "each nation or region produces its own distinctive modernity in its encounter with the allegedly culture-neutral forms and processes (science and technology, industrialization, secularization, bureaucratization, and so on)

characteristic of societal modernization” (Gaonkar, 2002, p.4). This theory, which when applied to *Femina*, helps explain how these pages produce more than just a space for women; they create a social imaginary that is enabled by modernity.

### INTRODUCTION TO THE SOCIAL SPHERE:

It is very important to first understand the evolution of the social sphere as this concept not only ties into the public's need for space and how they interact with it, but also shows how primitive Western societies organized themselves around the notion of recreation. There are a number of Western studies on social spheres and most of them can be traced back to the work of Emile Durkheim's, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1915). Merrin William, another sociologist captured the crux of Durkheim's work when he said in his article, “Durkheim says the intensity of common experience serves to renew and sustain the collective ideals of the society, and enhance social solidarity” (William, 1999, p.120). What's more, Durkheim looked at how life was organized in primitive societies and he concluded that the ‘social’ is a world where private people meet in a face-to-face relation, engage in collective rituals and dramatic performances. He goes on to state, “it is the homogeneity of these movements that gives the group consciousness of itself and consequently makes itself exist” (1965, p.263); thereby the group develops a ‘collective consciousness’ and creates a social fabric which helps maintain public life. Moreover, Durkheim believed that it was through such public gatherings that private members in a society were brought together and through such ritual interactions, a social fabric was created.

Even though Durkheim's observations were based on primitive Western societies, it can still be applied to several societies today. Furthermore, several researchers have advanced their

proposals based on Durkheim's theories of society. Zygmunt Bauman, Jurgen Habermas are just two such sociologists who exemplify that fact. Both of these researchers have discussed in great lengths about public and social spheres and Habermas specifically talks about how public life in modern societies is becoming individualistic in orientation, as opposed to how public life was organized in agrarian societies. They have thus successfully extended Durkheim's analysis from primitive to agrarian societies.

Another researcher, Ding-Tzann Lii, bases his study on the works of these and other sociologists. Lii in his study concludes that different societies create different forms of social sphere and the nature of public life changes with the changing structure of these social spheres (1998, p.131). He further adds that social spheres have three distinguishing aspects: a form of performance, a form of organization, and time structure. Lii furthers Habermas's notions on participation in public spheres and adds that different social spheres demands different rules of participation. For example, public festivals created an environment where people could decide whether they wanted to participate or not, something that was less collective and obligatory. On the other hand, modern spaces of recreation such as coffee houses created new rules of interaction something that was more formal. Also, with changes in time, leisurely recreation has developed as an independent aspect of social life thereby causing society to lose its unitary character.

It is this emergence of a world of leisurely recreation that has led to a lot of research on the audiences. Freidson in his research concluded that audiences of mass communication should not be referred to Herbert Blumer's notion of mass (especially with reference to a movie audience), which is defined as a heterogeneous group of people who do not know each other, are spatially separated, and therefore cannot interact with one another. Freidson says the research

that concerns with explaining why members of audiences behave the way they do, must avoid terming an audience as mass. He says that audience behavior is a social activity, a social dictate and therefore studies must not make sweeping generalizations of audiences as masses that engage in collective behavior. Besides, he adds that members of one local audience are distinct from that of another and therefore calling all audiences as a mass would force one to ignore the social nature that distinguishes each audience.

Another sociologist, Raymond Bauer (1958), furthers this research on mass communication and concludes that audiences influence the way the communicator organizes information, emphasizing the fact that media is made by society and also makes society. But it is William Beeman's (1993) work on theatre and spectacle that draws attention to this art form as a distinct cultural institution. Beeman focuses on theatre, the ancestor of movie, and says that it is a human institution dictated by culture. His work is based on earlier works of Maffesoli, Schechner and Turner. Michel Maffesoli suggests that any shared experience causes people to form a bond and thereby individual differences vanish to form group solidarity:

“Common experience gives rise to the formation of value: this is a vector of creation. It makes no difference whether this occurs at a macro or micro level, whether it takes place in the sphere of production or the environment or communication or lifestyles” (Maffesoli, 1991, p.9). Furthermore, he says that collective sentiments re-embed postmodern individuals and leads to the development of a new form of inclusion and a breaking down of old barriers.

Thus these traditional concepts of the social sphere leads to today's niche media audiences.

MULTIPLE MODERNITIES THESIS:

Michael Warner starts from where Habermas and the above researchers left off and he adds to the notion of publics and counterpublics. Warner defines the public in three ways:

(1) “the public is a kind of social totality. Its most common sense is that of people in general. It might be the people organized as the nation, the commonwealth, the city, the state, or some other community.

(2) a public can also be a concrete audience, a crowd witnessing itself in visible space, as with a theatrical public. Such a public also has a sense of totality, bounded by the event or by the shared physical space.

(3) the third kind of public comes into being only in relation to texts and their circulation” (Warner, 2002, p. 49). It is the author’s third definition of the public that is of relevance to modernity and the social imaginary.

Warner goes on to list several characteristics that make up the public. The first feature is that the public is self-organized. In this sense, there is circular relationship where a public exists just so that it can be addressed and it is addressed because it exists. Therefore, the author says, “a public in this sense is as much notional as empirical” (p.50), and this empirical audience could include an infinite number of publics. This never-ending concept of the public can be exemplified when one looks at the audience of a text, which can be picked up at, any time, any where by unrelated people. Warner also clarifies on how one can tell if he/she belongs to a public: “what determines whether one belongs to a public or not? Space and physical presence do not make much difference; a public is understood to be different from a crowd, an audience, or any other group that requires co-presence. Personal identity does not in itself make one part of a public. Publics differ from nations, races, professions, or any other groups that, though not

requiring co-presence, saturate identity. Belonging to a public seems to require at least minimal participation, even if it is patient or notional, rather than a permanent state of being” (Warner, 2002, p.51). In addition the author says that cultural forms mediate publics and they exist by virtue of their address. Hence even though publics are considered imaginary, writing to them is not and it has some social bases. “Writing to a public incorporates that tendency of writing or speech as a condition of possibility. It cannot go astray in the same way because reaching strangers is its primary orientation. In modernity, this understanding of the public is best illustrated by uses of print or electronic media, but it can also be extended to scenes of audible speech, if that speech is oriented to indefinite strangers, once the crucial background horizon of ‘public opinion’ and its social imaginary has been made available” (Warner, 2002, p.52).

Warner’s second characteristic states that the public is defined by a relation among strangers who are united through participation. Moreover, there is an affiliation among these strangers who are on a path to commonality. The next feature that defines public says that it is constituted through mere attention. The author explains this by saying that when a public looks at a text, it doesn’t react passively but begins to process the words immediately.

The next dimension to the public says that it is the social space created by the reflexive circulation of discourse. “No single text can create a public. Nor can a single voice, a single genre, or even a single medium. All are insufficient to create the kind of reflexivity that we call a public, since a public is understood to be an ongoing space of encounter for discourse. It is not texts themselves that create publics, but the concatenation of texts through time. Only when a previously existing discourse can be supposed, and a responding discourse be postulated, can a text address a public” (Warner, 2002, p.57). Thus interaction takes place when the discourse is continuous. The author also says that anything that addresses a public must undergo circulation

and this explains why print was so central to the development for public spheres (p.58).

“Writing to a public helps to make a world, insofar as the object of address is brought into being partly by postulating and characterizing it. This performative ability depends, however, on that object’s being not entirely fictitious – not postulated merely, but recognized as a real path for the circulation of discourse” (Warner, 2002, p.58). Hence it is important to be conscious of the public when writing to it and this awareness of the indefinite is incorporated into the meaning of the print.

The appearance of newsletters, magazines, pamphlets and other punctual print material is credited with giving rise to the modern public. This temporality leads to the next defining feature: ‘publics act historically according to the temporality of their circulation.’ Publics are intertextual and intergeneric as they have an ongoing life in which texts keep circulating. Interestingly, the author notes, “a public seems to be self-organized by discourse, but in fact requires preexisting forms and channels of circulation. It appears to be open to indefinite strangers, but in fact selects participants by criteria of shared social space, habitus, topical concerns, intergeneric references, and circulating intelligible forms” (Warner, 2002, p.64).

A number of studies have been done on society, nationalism and the advent of modernity that build on the above notion of the public (Castoriadis, 1987; Tomlinson, 1991, Appadurai, 1996; Calhoun, 1997; Taylor, 1995). Out of these, of particular relevance to this study is the ‘multiple modernities thesis’ and the concept of the social imaginary as put forth by Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, Arjun Appadurai, and Charles Taylor.

Appadurai in his work *Modernity At Large* (1996) tracks modernity from a global perspective. He says that imagination is the multiple ways by which people live lives in and through modernity. Imagination is given a new look due to globalization in the form of mass

migration and mass mediation: “whether moving voluntarily in search of better lives or moving involuntarily as refugees and persecuted people, the migrants have lost the worlds into which they were born and are therefore forced to construct new imagined worlds that rarely coincide with geopolitical space or the ideologies of the nation-states. These imagined worlds, which combine memory and desire in unexpected ways, can create loyalties and affiliations that are sometimes violently hostile to the modernizing projects of nation states and sometimes to modernity itself” (Gaonkar, 2002, p.8). Thus he looks into how translocal identities and solidarities blend into the folds of the new imaginary.

Charles Taylor adds to the concepts of modernity and imaginary and his study draws heavily from Habermas as he looks into how Western modernity relates to the concept of social imaginary, and he aims to show that Western modernity is a new concept of the moral order of society. He says that public sphere is a central feature of a modern society. He defines the public sphere as “a common space in which members of a society meet through a variety of media: print and electronic as well as face-to-face encounters, wherein they discuss matters of common interest and thus are able to form a common mind about these” (Taylor, 2002, p.103). Thus it is in these spaces that people with common purposes assemble and sometimes the sphere transcends topical spaces; it led to the emergence of metatopical spaces. Further, the article says that the modern public sphere relied on print capitalism to get it going, even though the condition was not sufficient enough. Thus in order for the public sphere to survive it mutated with the social imaginary.

Key to understanding the social imaginary is modernity, which is “that historically unprecedented amalgam of new practices and institutional forms (science, technology, industrial production, urbanization), of new ways of living (individualism, secularization, instrumental

rationality), and of new forms of malaise (alienation, meaninglessness, a sense of social dissolution)” (Taylor, 2002, p.91). Additionally he says that there are two ways by which one can understand modernity. The first one is the ‘cultural theory of modernity’ which looks into transformations that have arisen within a particular culture. The acultural theory describes modernity in terms of a loss of traditional beliefs and allegiances (Taylor, 2000, p.366). Taylor also says that it is important to not refer to modernity in the singular but refer to it as multiple modernities as development occurs in traditional societies through modernization, which can take many forms. The other interesting aspect of the multiple modernities thesis is that the adaptations to modernity will not be identical across civilizations. Modernity is not one single phenomenon; it involves multiple processes and is inseparable from ‘social imaginary.’

The author describes social imaginary as “ways in which people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations” (Gaonkar, 2002, p.6). It is therefore the various ways by which people do things; the ways by which people see themselves as occupying a particular space and traversing it; ways by which they make sense of their historical and social existence. The social imaginary according to Taylor (2002) has a few characteristics: it is a common understanding of not only the way things are done, but the way they should be and this brings about certain legitimacy; it is shared by large groups of people and may come to infiltrate the entire society; they exist by virtue of representation; and are means by which people understand their place in this world. Most importantly, modernity and its multiple forms depend on this social imaginary which links strangers through some form of mass mediation.

Warner adds to this concept and says, “I also suspect that the development of the social imaginary of publics, as a relation among strangers that is projected from private readings of circulating texts, has exerted over the past three centuries a powerful gravity on the conception of the human, elevating what is understood to be the faculties of the private reader as the essential faculties of man” (Warner, 2002, p.64).

Gaonkar also states that the social imaginary posited by him, Taylor and Appadurai are very different from the concept as put forth by Cornelius Castoriadis in *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (1987), whose name is very closely associated with the idea of social imaginary. Castoriadis was concerned with how multiple social-historical worlds were possible and he wanted to identify the creative forces that made up social-historical worlds. This author believed that every society was a self-creating, self-instituting enterprise. Castoriadis cites the invention of philosophy and democracy by the ancient Greeks as an example of society wherein a socio-historical world was created in a rupture in time. Moreover people make sense of their reality as they mediate through the social imaginary. He explains it as such “for what is given in and through history is not the determined sequence of the determined but the emergence of radical otherness, immanent creation, non-trivial novelty” (Castoriadis, 1987, p.184). Gaonkar interprets this definition of the social imaginary as a socio-historical world that is created through ruptures of imaginative practices by anonymous people who are aware of their creativity as a people.

Furthermore, Castoriadis says that the social imaginary enables people to do mundane things in variety of ways. He also distinguishes between two types of social-historical formations: heteronomous and autonomous. “In heteronomous societies – often glossed as ‘primitive’- the laws, norms, values, myths, and meanings are posited as given once and for all,

and their indisputable status is derived from an extra-social or action-transcendent source. In contrast, the autonomous societies habitually call into question their own institutions and representations and the social imaginary underwrites them. Here the people as collective agents recognize the contingency and constructedness of their world and that world is made possible through the workings of the social imaginary” (Gaonkar, 2002, p.5).

As Gaonkar analyses Castoriadis’s work he also finds certain aspects with which he differs. Gaonkar feels that Castoriadis’s work is highly Eurocentric; is an idealization of the Greek States; and that he dichotomizes societies assuming that neither one borrows from the other.

Nonetheless, Gaonkar further adds to Castoriadis’s concept and says “through the collective agency of the social imaginary a society is created, given coherence and identity, and also subject to auto-alterations, both mundane and radical, within historical time. Each society is created differently, subsists differently, and transforms itself differently” (Gaonkar, 2002, p.4). The social imaginary therefore as defined by these authors occupies a fluid middle ground between embodied practices and explicit doctrines in Western societies.

Moreover this theory explains how Western modernity “came to imagine society as an economy for exchanging goods and services to promote mutual prosperity; how man began to imagine the public sphere as a metatopical space for deliberation and discussion among strangers on issues of mutual concern; how we invented the idea of self-governing people capable of ‘founding’ acts in a purely secular time without recourse to action-transcendent principles” (Gaonkar, 2002, p.7). Gaonkar also says that Taylor’s account of the multiple modernities thesis allows cultural forms to be refigured both in meaning and content when they are located in social imaginaries that are different from the West.

Thus, using the perspectives of the above authors, *Femina* can then be seen as a ‘metatopical’ place where strangers can read about issues of concern to them; it is in a sense a manifestation of a social imaginary. Moreover, this magazine was a product of the interaction between globalization and a metropolitan society’s way of life. The women who subscribe to *Femina* and everyone who is involved with it, choose to represent and understand themselves. They don’t prescribe to any specific identity either as a homemaker or a career woman and choose to be everything that includes and ranges between these two categories. Therefore, they collectively negotiate their space and identity through the pages of *Femina*. Also, being constantly exposed and molded by globalization they feel legitimated in producing contradictory and complimentary identities for themselves.

Hence *Femina* is a product of the social imaginary of global Indian women who choose to define, defend, and reinvent their own identities

#### METHOD:

With this theoretical explanation in mind, I want to find out:

- R1: What role does *Femina* want to play in the lives of its readers?
- R2: How does the magazine appeal to both genders to promote feminism?
- R3: How does *Femina*, as a part of the growing consciousness of the feminist movement, relate to the process of globalization and development?

To answer these questions I analyzed the January to August 2003 issues of *Femina*. Being a fortnightly magazine, I analyzed 12 issues in total (February 15, July 1 and August 15 issues could not be located). I had to limit myself to this time frame due to the problems associated with finding all the issues of this magazine. Living in the diaspora made it extremely hard to

acquire hard copies of the magazine from India, which limited the time frame to these dates. The magazine is available online at [www.femina.indiatimes.com](http://www.femina.indiatimes.com), but the archives did not yield the issues that I was looking for. With the exception of advertisements all content in the magazine was looked into. Thus, 55 stories were analyzed for recurrent themes.

Through a textual analysis (qualitative method) I explored the themes and patterns of representation as prescribed for women by *Femina*. This method has been employed by many before me who have studied magazines (Hegde, 1995; K.Srilata, 1998; Parmeswaran, 2002; Sreenivas 2003) and this study will continue in that tradition.

According to Hall (1975), textual analysis calls for three distinctive stages:

- (1) A “long preliminary soak” in the text, which allows the analyst to focus on particular issues while preserving “the big picture.”
- (2) Close readings of the text and identification of discursive strategies and themes
- (3) Interpretation of the findings within the larger framework of the study.

Thus, using textual analysis I explored the contradictory and complimentary identities that are represented in these pages over a period of six months.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS

In *Femina* there are certain themes that tend to circulate and dominate the pages, most of which have to do with challenging patriarchal ideologies. Consequently most articles deal with one of the following: re-arrangement of traditional marriages; the internationally aware and informed homemaker and the mother who prefers having daughters to sons; an exemplar of womanhood – the superwoman; single in the mix; new identities and new careers; *Femina* and a new generation of men; *Femina* and the feminist movement; and globalization aids *Femina*. The following themes are presented in order of their significance and in order to which they were most represented in the magazine.

#### RE-ARRANGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL MARRIAGES:

The Indian sub-continent has a history of subscribing to the institution of arranged marriages and *Femina* urges women to keep up with the changing times and encourages them to find their own men. In addition to finding men, the magazine presents readers with an overview of some of the potential problems that may arise during the course and what they can do to overcome these issues. Women are also continually informed and guided about how they can be confident of their sexuality.

There are numerous articles that serve as guides for women to be proactive and find the man of their dreams (April 15; p.44). In this article women are told to get out in the social circle; are told to use their friends and work on their relationships. The readers are also informed about

a new phenomenon in the UK, called ‘speed dating’ where women can meet up to 30 men in one night at a club. In addition to these guides, every month the magazine dedicates a page or two to a section titled ‘meeting ground,’ which is like a classified type ad that features photographs of four or more ‘eligible bachelors’ (Feb. 1, 2003: p. 85-86; June 15, 2003: p.102). These matrimonial have photographs of men along with their résumé and call out to potential women. Interestingly, most of these bachelors seem to want to marry professionally qualified women and also require that they hold ‘traditional’ Indian values. This seems ironic as the present generation of Indian men seem to value economically independent women, but they simultaneously hope that she will be in charge of the home the moment she gets back from work. In case, neither of the above suggestions work out, the readers are told to seek love in other venues like on the internet. The article titled ‘Love Bytes’ (April 15; p.53) talks about the possibilities of romance online and it features a picture of actress Meg Ryan sitting in front of her lap top, from the movie ‘You’ve Got Mail.’ The writer seems to aim those women who might be shy to ask a guy out and encourages them to go online and express themselves: “Too meek to ask a guy out? Couldn’t tell him how much you enjoyed last evening? Or want to share that erotic dream you had of him? You don’t even need make-up or a snazzy outfit or to wait to pick a moment – when you’re online, just the excitement of finding your loved one logged on is turn-on enough.” Further on, the article says web cameras perched on computers will add new meaning to long-distance romances.

While simultaneously suggesting alternate ways by which women can find potential marriage partners, there are articles, which question the very concept of marriage. ‘Do you believe live-in relationships work better than a marriage?’ (April 15, p. 100) invites responses from both men and women, who debate both sides.

This emphasis on marriage and its changing terrain is reflected from readers letters as well, as they write to experts in sections like ‘home truths’ about unhappy marriages, the practicability in marrying a younger man, the pressure of remaining a virgin, and extra marital affairs. Even though the topics of these letters are not new, the fact that these issues are raised by women is inspirational. For example, Indian women are not allowed to express their sexuality or even profess to have such feelings. In this context, when stories are written about married women being attracted to men other than their husbands, it compels patriarchal society to recognize the presence of women who have sexual urges and needs just like men: ‘Dangerous Liaisons? Married But Attracted to Another Man’ (May 15). In this article the writer Pooja Kapur, asks women where they would draw the line when it comes to being attracted to another man. While some claim flirting is harmless, others say they would never want to get physically intimate. Kapur also changed the names of a few sources, both men and women, to protect their identity, thereby indicating that the topic of sexuality is still not openly discussed in society. However, the magazine recognizes the need for women to explore their sexuality and provides them with articles such as: ‘where can I buy a vibrator?’ (Jan.1); ‘romantic moves from the movies’ (Feb. 15, p. 46); ‘increase your sexual pleasure’ (March 1, p. 35); and ‘perfect that kiss’ (March 15, p. 53). Thus what all these articles have in common is that they encourage women to be active and advice them to enjoy their sexuality.

Once the women find the right man then they are met with a plethora of articles that help them deal with problems that arise during marriage: ‘Beyond the honeymoon and into the real world’ (April 1, p.41); ‘When money mars your marital relationship – can your marriage be saved?’ (July 15, p.44), ‘Learn to negotiate with your honey’ (May 15, p.45), ‘10 kinds of men - Which one is yours?’ (Feb.1). The July 15 story talked in great length about the contentions that

arise when one partner, here the woman, is seen as a spend thrift. The author goes on to suggest that regardless of the issue, it is important for both partners to confess to their shortcomings.

Thus these articles that look into the strife that stems in these relationships aim at being a communicative tool to help the genders bridge the gap. In addition to this, there are features on famous celebrities and their married lives (April 1, p. 45). However, not all such stories portray happily married celebrities. There was one story where Dona Gangulay, wife of India's cricket captain, talks about her marriage and how she deals with her husband's alleged infidelity (January 1; p. 141).

This goes to show that even though *Femina* places a heavy emphasis on marriage, it exposes its readers to all facets of the situation from the storybook happy relationships, to the not so good ones. Moreover, by having famous women talk about how they deal with infidelity and such related issues, the magazine attempts to show its readers that they are not alone. *Femina* therefore defends a woman's identity as wife and demands she be considered an equal partner.

#### THE INTERNATIONALLY AWARE AND INFORMED HOMEMAKER AND THE MOTHER WHO PREFERS HAVING DAUGHTERS TO SONS:

Every issue dedicates pages after pages advising women on how to be a perfect homemaker. There are tips on how to have stain free homes; a section titled 'spaces' that guides readers on how to decorate their boudoir ('Places to visit, things to buy for your new house' April 1, p.116). In the April 1<sup>st</sup> issue readers are introduced to contemporary furniture put forth by Interiors Espania. Another section called 'food' contains recipes from every corner of the world to satiate one's appetite ('Chocolate! Ummm...' April 1, p.118). It's interesting to see that just as *Femina* prescribes diverse identities for women; it also urges readers to blend local

cuisine with international flavors. This is exemplified in the July 15 issue where a local savory called ‘chaat’ is made to go global (p. 96). Here the readers are offered instructions on how to cross the border with ‘chaat’ and make it western. Along those same lines there are recipes for making all kinds of food from doughnuts to falafel.

For the readers who also happen to be mothers the magazine offers parenting advice regularly: ‘Great strategies to help your kid conquer fear’ (July 15, p. 54); ‘Don’t let your kid slouch! Lighten their school bags’ (April 1, p. 49); ‘The latest kiddie accessories’ (June 1, p. 42). However, the most encouraging facet to this parenting information is the page titled ‘Links: My dream for my daughter is. Readers write in’ (April 1, p. 54). Every month this page is adorned with pictures of girls, ages one to seven, accompanied by a sentence or two on what their mothers hope for them. Writes one mother on what she hopes for her one-and-a-half year old daughter, “my dream for my daughter is that she goes through this wonderful journey called life with a smile on her face, and channels her innate intelligence into something truly fulfilling and enriching (April 1, p. 54).” Another mother writes, “my dream for my daughter is that she may be the Kiran Bedi (police officer) or Kalpana Chawla (astronaut) of tomorrow. That she may hold the reigns of the nation to get rid of corruption.” These sentiments are echoed by most mothers who dream that their daughters be leaders of their tomorrow.

‘Links’ is not just an inspirational section of this magazine but a relevant and a much needed one in a nation where female infanticide is considered a solution among a majority of families who desire sons. This page is often times supported by stories on ‘The *Femina* little princess foundation’ where readers are introduced to various non governmental organizations who work to improve the lives of less fortunate girls and the readers are thereby encouraged to donate to charities that educate orphaned girl children. “The establishment of the *Femina* Little

Princess Foundation was announced at the *Femina* Miss India Contest 2001. Its objectives are to look into the nutritional, social and economic needs of the girl child – in fact, to better the life of the girl child in India” (May 15, p. 57). It is by providing readers with this kind of information that the magazine empowers women not just of the current generation but sows seeds in future generations of women as well, and educates people to get rid of the notion that girls are financial burdens while boys are assets.

#### AN EXEMPLAR OF WOMANHOOD – THE SUPERWOMAN:

Women readers in this generation are also provided with regular stories on ‘True Mettle: *Femina* Platinum Woman’ (May 15, p.18). This routine section advocates the identity of the superwoman and celebrates her as a woman of grit. The women who find themselves in these pages are those women who are leaders in the business world and caregivers at home. By showcasing such women, *Femina* celebrates not just the working woman but applauds her for taking care of her children as well. Sulajja Firodia Motwani was *Femina*’s platinum woman in the May 15 issue. Motwani is the joint managing director of Kinetic Engineering and is the mother of a two-year old son. The article says about her “she manages being a mom, wife and a businesswoman without compromising on any sphere” (p. 19). Another platinum woman was actress Neena Gupta who validated women over the age of 35; those women who were considered useless as they were housewives and stay-at-home moms. Gupta is also a single parent and wears that role proudly (p. 20). Thus the magazine seems to celebrate those women who not only do everything men do, but do it better.

### SINGLE IN THE MIX:

Amidst images of wives, homemakers, mothers and superwomen, the magazine displays the identity of a woman who is single, economically independent and happy. This is exemplified in the January 1 issue where 'being single in the season' is celebrated, and in the June 15 issue there is an article that discusses the fear of committing to marriage. Usually one would associate the latter fear to men and when women express the same concern and a woman's magazine talks about the issue, it sends a shiver down the spine of patriarchy. In the June 15 story, the writer talks about couples who are still debating whether they need to tie the knot, couples who 'almost lived in' and the anxiety caused by those who have had past relationships. This seems to suggest that in India, there seem to be quite a few challenges to the concept that relationships have to end in marriages (p. 46). In addition to such articles there are profiles on various models and actresses who are single and loving it. By prescribing such identities the magazine provides a woman with a break from her stereotypical image as that of a wife and mother and attempts to validate her new identity.

### NEW IDENTITIES AND NEW CAREERS:

Ever since women forayed into the male dominated public realms, they have become doctors, engineers, lawyers, astronauts and have dared to become everything that was forbidden to them. The magazine profiles women who have ventured into different jobs and have found happiness with it. For example, in the January 1 issue (p. 127) *Femina* introduces its readers to India's first woman horse trainer, Aarti Doctor, and provides readers with information on how they too can be one if they desire. The same issue also talked about how Bollywood actresses who played the roles of damsels in distress now crack the whip as they turn film producers (p.

116). Furthermore, in the May 1 issue, readers are introduced to Donna Symmonds, “the only woman cricket commentator in the world” (p. 147). The writer of this article does a great job in profiling Symmonds and portrays her as a woman who has held her own in a man’s world. The magazine thereby tempts its readers to be bold and venture off into unexplored territory and go where not just any woman has been before but also go where no man has been before.

#### FEMINA AND A NEW GENERATION OF MEN:

Even though women’s magazines evolved as communicative spaces for women, this magazine does not alienate men; instead *Femina* embraces, includes and targets them as well and has done so from its very inception. Moreover, according to Vimla Patil, a former editor of the magazine, men make up 50 percent of the readership. This has to do with the fact that in India the woman’s movement was initiated by men and even today men continue to be actively involved. Indira Gandhi, former prime minister of India, once said that the way to improve the status of women was not just empower them but educate the men and change their attitudes towards women. *Femina* seems to work on this mantra and attempts to not just empower women but wants to create a whole new generation of men as well: “The whole concept of Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus needs a certain amount of change and we are trying to bridge gender differences through our content. While we are a women’s magazine, it is natural that most of our content would be about women. Yet we also make an effort to incorporate the male point of view through segments like the ones on Jerry Pinto, Milind Soman and Salil Sadanandan. The idea is to help men and women understand each other better” says Saran, editor of the magazine.

As a result, topics on marriage, relationships and sex offer male and female perspectives. For example, in the article ‘would you hide an abortion from your husband’ (Jan 1) there were various quotes from women and one boxed response from a man was also provided. With relation to marriage, there are interviews with leading actors and models (Mar. 1; p.87) and the men are asked about their idea of the perfect woman. Moreover, there is section titled ‘men only’ or ‘men’ that devotes five to six pages solely to them. The topics that are covered usually tend to be profiles on male celebrities not just Indian, but the world over (Leonardo DiCaprio was profiled in the February 15 issue); and fashion watch on what’s hot and what’s not. Furthermore to capture the wanderlust in man, almost every issue features articles on potential travel locales as well. *Femina* therefore lures in the male readers to educate them about women’s issues and hopes to create a generation of men who are different from their patriarchal predecessors.

#### FEMINA AND THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT:

I have learnt the art of friendship, politics, submission, resilience, femininity and power.  
--Maia Katrak

Indian actress extraordinaire Shabana Azmi was once asked if she would rather be born a man. To this she replied that she wants to be born a woman who enjoys all the rights and freedom that men experience. It is in this society that the magazine created its own relation with feminism. In India it is very hard to separate a woman’s identity from that of a mother and wife and even though women are well on their way to creating their own space in society, they have a long way to go. Thus, the pages of this magazine not only validate the new identity of women but also attempt to empower those who are mothers, wives and daughters. “If we were dealing with a success story of a woman who has come out of a bad marriage, our stress would be on the

success story and not on the bad marriage. *Femina* is not interested in taking sides; neither does it publish one-sided accounts. Our content is more about positive values, which are meant to inspire others” adds the editor of *Femina*.

In this attempt there are issues that frequent the pages that deals with women’s economic independence such as “would you hide your income from your spouse” (March 15) and others that encourage women to be their own bosses as seen in “How to start a new restaurant” (March 1). The March 15 issue thereby dedicated about 20 pages to inform women about economics and hence information was provided on how one apply for loans to buy a new house (p. 148); ‘Mutual Funds – understanding the basics’ (p. 151); ‘Personal loans: the dos and don’ts of bank loans’ (p. 154); ‘Insurance’ (p. 158); and ‘Money faqs’ (p. 160). The magazine also seems to want to challenge the origins of the ancient Hindu blessing: ‘may you be the mother of a hundred sons.’ To do so there was an article in the June 15 issue that provided readers with the ways by which one could terminate one’s pregnancy and the July 15 issue ran a cover story on daughters versus sons and concluded that daughters were better. In addition, women are made aware of the different forms of contraception that is available in the market. The May 15 article ‘Pillow Talk’ provides the benefits and the risks of taking a birth control pill, thereby giving women power to control their reproduction.

In addition, *Femina* also celebrates womanhood and therefore discusses aging and its implications for women and provides monthly doses of self-help literature that deals with self-esteem. Amidst these issues there are many themes that suggest to Indian women to live out of her box; the August 1 issue had an article discussing ways to propose marriage; and the March 15 article, ‘I am who I am’ looks into the Indian woman’s new mantra: “it’s my life, my choice and my responsibility” (p. 163). This article looks into how women chose to live their lives and

validate themselves in all their roles. “Time was some years ago, when a non-career, married woman, would dismissively define herself as ‘just a housewife’ and cringe into a non-person. The very term implied that housewife was a lesser species, not of the same ilk as their worthy peers who went to work and juggled homes and careers. Now, the housewife is asserting herself. You see this in the many young women-caring mothers, happy domestics, who have chosen not to work. Or have given up time consuming jobs so as to give whole-heartedly to the trying job of home. It is a new, fresh, frank attitude to life and self. You see it in the readiness with which they adopt the ‘F’ word. Earlier it was, ‘I’m a feminist, but...’ and the defensive act would begin. Today it is: ‘Yes, I’m a feminist, and...’ ” (p. 164). All this goes to show that the magazine wants its readers to feel good about being born as women.

To continue with this agenda of empowerment the March 1<sup>st</sup> issue was exclusively dedicated to Women`s Day. That issue was devoted to make women feel worthy and made men feel they were missing out if they were not with women; it urged women to celebrate their womanhood. The cover story, ‘Faster, Higher, Further’ presented readers with women who had conquered new frontiers and had raised the level for women as a whole (p. 12). Here the readers are told, “women, women everywhere. Be it in the Xth standard merit list, university rank holder, company’s senior management or medal winners at international meets. Where are the men? Are they failing to keep up?” The writer says that there is no arena where women haven’t proved their merit. There were articles that asked male celebrities what they admired in their mothers, wives and daughters; write-ups that implored men to wow their women on women’s day; and stories that showed women how to translate their reproductive rights into reality. While these talks would have made some people uncomfortable they were just part of a stream of others

that includes the concerns over getting breast implants, to debates about homosexuality and transgendered people.

GLOBALIZATION AIDS *FEMINA*:

With transnational flow of economy and culture came along fluid identities. Globalization afforded Indian women to alloy race, nation and femininity with a global culture. Thereby women could have multiple identities. “We have always been fine-tuning our content in order to keep in step with the changing times. When we see a change in society, we bring out a similar change in content. We are now including content on computers, ecology, relationships, things that we didn't emphasize on earlier. Beauty is a big pre occupation for young women today and we have increased our content on the same. Creative writing seems to have lost its market because of the growing influence of television, which is why; we have reduced our content on the same. Again, we have increased our people columns. The idea is to anticipate the change in requirements and bring out content in accordance with that. It's like making a perfect bhaji, the ingredients have to be manipulated in order to suit the tastes of the consumer” says Saran on the evolution of *Femina* with time (Saran, 2003).

The pages of this magazine definitely keep up with the times and hence there are feature stories on Hollywood celebrities like Renee Zellweger (March 1, p.119), Christy Turlington (March 15, p.174) and these women among others serve as role models to Indian women as well. Moreover, fashion is circulated and the reader is exposed to six yards of embroidered saris, well cut salwaar kurtas, and can see the latest trend that walk off-the ramp from Paris and Milan. The January 1 issue ran a cover story, ‘addicted to rush’ that listed the way one can experience a few thrills in life. Among these were suggestions such as ‘wear lingerie to work or ride a leg of

the Tour de France.’ Moreover, the women who would want to wear lingerie to work could browse through the Louis Vuitton Spring-Summer 2003 collection, which was presented a few pages later in the same issue.

Global influences were not limited to the presentation of fashion in these pages. Most of the articles that were written primarily for an Indian audience made reference to some western product be it movies or music. For example, in the article ‘single in the season’ the author draws a reference to ‘that old Bruce Springsteen song – 59 channels and nothing to watch’ and several paragraphs later mentions Indiana Jones (Jan. 1). In the March 15 article, ‘She’s talking’ (p. 176) the writer, Maia Katrak, talks about one woman’s journey of forming her own family with her surrogate kids. Here Katrak starts off with reference to the show ‘Sex and the City’ thereby spelling out that she is writing for those women who are viewers of this HBO show. “I was watching ‘Sex and The City’ the other day. A funky, bitter-sweet episode in which Sarah Jessica Parker discovers that real family isn’t necessarily the one you are born into, but rather the one you assemble for yourself along the way. Your soul family.” Thus, it seems quite clear that the audience that the magazine caters to is one that is clearly influenced by a Western culture.

#### CONCLUSIONS:

Every girl needs a sisterhood, a sorority of the heart.

-- Maia Katrak

*Femina* therefore is a sisterhood for all those women whose lives and identities are continually being molded. Globalization is the force that compels and allows an Indian woman to have multiple identities: she can be a managing director of a multinational company, be attired

in an Armani suit; have lunch at a fast-food joint, come home change into a 'kurta' (a traditional Indian outfit) and spend time with her children and husband and not feel guilty about doing so.

Textual analysis therefore showed how studying a text such as the pages of *Femina* is a way by which reality can be understood. Moreover, the method helped to answer the following research questions.

R1: What role does *Femina* want to play in the lives of its readers?

The magazine wants to provide its readers with a space where issues that concern and relate to them are discussed. For example, the June 15 issue helps readers "make sense of the yoga craze," 'fight the commitment bogey' and talks about 'how one would confront a relative if he abused your child.' Thus *Femina* wants to educate the reader and keep him/her up-to-date on the latest trends and lifestyles around the world. Moreover, with regard to its women readers, the magazine encourages them to be pro-active and take charge of their lives.

R2: How does the magazine appeal to both genders to promote feminism?

The magazine is a tool that helps the sexes bridge the communication gap between them. For example, a number of articles inform men on how to please their women in bed, and a number of articles help women better understand men. Additionally, women are religiously informed about how to become economically independent and in this effort are provided with articles on how they can start their own businesses. In addition, the magazine portrays the new Indian father as one who believes that having a girl child is an asset and not a burden.

R3: How does *Femina*, as part of the growing consciousness of the feminist movement, relate to the process of globalization and development?

Globalization has given *Femina* the opportunity to validate and re-invent women's identities.

For example, with the circulation of goods and ideas, came about an exchange of identities and

in this modern environment, Indian women no longer have to be just housewives or stay-at-home moms. They are introduced to new careers and are educated about how to pursue these new careers. Also, by routinely profiling women in Hollywood and elsewhere, *Femina* inspires the reader to live out of her box and encourages her to believe in her dreams.

This magazine therefore prescribes many different identities for its women and validates their role as wives, homemakers, mothers, superwomen, single women and credits them in each one of these images. Hence it plays the role of corroborating the numerous identities in a woman's life. *Femina* includes men as it attempts to educate them and hopes to change their attitude towards women and aims to help the sexes communicate better with each other. The magazine is part and parcel of the feminist movement as it aims to empower and equip generations of women so that they can then challenge and change patriarchy, and thereby urges them to mould their identity with the ebb and flow of globalization.

Sathya Saran captures the essence of the magazine and says, "*Femina* is about women exploring themselves and striving for the better, in addition to looking at the world with new eyes and empathizing with the people's troubles" (Saran, 2003).

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

I have literally grown up with *Femina* and having analyzed it I look at it very differently now. This magazine isn't just about the happenings of upper-middle class life in Mumbai; it serves as a window into a society of women who are in the process of changing the terrain of Indian patriarchal society. The purpose of this study was to initially carry over from where Radha Sharma Hegde (1995) had left off, update her study, challenge it and offer a different view. Hegde felt strongly that *Femina* indulged in delicate chit-chat about feminism and ten years later I now feel that the magazine boldly embraces its agenda. Susan Parulekar (2001) on the other hand felt that *Femina* was meant just for an elite group of women who were negotiating their identity in a space where global meets local culture.

While both the above researchers are right in their own views and times, I believe that it is a matter of perspective. As a woman who has only experienced life in the diaspora I see this magazine as a weapon to fight patriarchal ideology.

Hegde's concerns about *Femina* might have been true for that time. In 1995, economic reforms in India and the entry of multinational firms were just on the onset and therefore the influence of a global culture was not as note worthy as it is today. As a result, the magazine might have had to take the middle road if it had to ensure its success and gain greater foothold in a patriarchal society. Nonetheless, nine years later *Femina* now comfortably couched in a global society has embraced a more feminist position and it boldly discusses issues related to women's sexuality and encourages women to be what they want to be. Prior issues would think twice before they even consider publishing anything related to women as single parents. However,

subsequent issues have not only talked about single parents but *Femina* also exemplified it with a cover photograph of Sushmita Sen: Miss India; Miss World; Bollywood actress; and now a successful single mother (2001).

In addition, while Hegde felt that *Femina* only flirted with the issue of feminism, I feel that it was a deliberate attempt by the women behind this magazine to do so to gain a stronger footing in society. Had *Femina* taken the stand it takes today the magazine would have folded long back. Thus, it was strategic to position *Femina* first as a magazine that abides by tradition and gradually have it evolve. Hegde and Parulekar also suggest that *Femina* offers women a space where new identities are negotiated. These identities are an amalgamation of women's traditional roots and western influences. Additionally, the reason why this magazine appeals more to the upper-class women is because these women are exposed to the global culture and they have the economic ability and freedom to mould themselves to it.

Based on past literature that looked into Western media preferences, factors like class, sex, age and income were found to play a huge role in how readers use the print medium. In addition to these factors, there are individual differences as well that account for the diverse ways people use the medium. It has also been found that people who belong to higher classes in society read 'heavy' materials, have a strong need-to-know desire and they get involved in issues that concern them. Hence based on studies by King and Summers (1966) and Reissman (1954) among many others, Indian women who belong to the upper middle and elite classes of society consume *Femina*. These women are financially independent and therefore more active in participating in society. Thus, this magazine just like its predecessors provided women with a space where they could vent out their concerns and bestowed on them a sense of community. Initially the topics of discussion did not include women's rights and this changed over time.

However, these upper class Indian women moreover wanted to bring a change in their society and participated in the feminist movement. A magazine was employed to achieve this goal and all the variables from editorial tone, to style, and comprehension that Johnson (1983) explores in his article can be correlated to the high readership of this magazine. Also noteworthy is the fact that the woman's movement in India always had male participants and hence this magazine has a huge male readership. Additionally as Patil, former editor of the magazine said, no society would progress leaving one gender behind. Hence this magazine aims to include men in an attempt to influence them. Another facet to this situation is the recognition of the importance for indigenous people to write about their own culture and not have to rely solely on western researchers. Thus, when Indian women and scholars write about their own experiences it helps de-mystify a culture.

Hence, Indian women created their own social sphere via the pages of *Femina* and produced their own 'modern' identity, which is an amalgamation of femininity, race, nation and global culture.

This magazine offers women a space and a place where anonymous women can discuss issues of concern. These women chose to represent and understand themselves and they don't prescribe to any specific identity either as a homemaker or a career woman and choose to be everything that includes and ranges between these two categories. Therefore, they collectively negotiate their space and identity through the pages of *Femina*. Also, being constantly exposed and molded by globalization they feel legitimated in producing various identities for themselves and want to be validated in each one of these roles.

*Femina* thereby attempts to validate the numerous identities that women assume. The magazine does not see a house-wife as 'just' a house-wife or a stay-at-home mom as 'just' a

stay-at-home mom. These women find themselves being talked about, find issues that concern them being discussed in these pages and hence feel validated in what they do. Moreover, the pages credit those women who are career women by day and moms/wives at night and use them to inspire other women who might feel they lack the ability to juggle so many identities. With regard to the superwoman, Hegde felt that the magazine only profiled those women who were married or keen on getting married. However, I have found that in 2003 the profiles of superwomen were not restricted to those women who believe in marriage and include single women and single mothers as well.

*Femina* also ushers in a whole new image that of a single, independent woman who is not seeking marriage and is happy about it. This new image therefore attempts to break the mould of women as solely being wives and mothers. *Femina* attempts to not just empower women but wants to create a whole new generation of men as well; men who allow women to be what they want to be and credits them for every role that they assume.

The magazine thereby facilitated a social imaginary which is a common understanding of not only the way things are done, but the way they should be and representation of various identities brought about a certain legitimacy. This way of life as seen in the pages of this magazine is now shared by large groups of people and may soon come to infiltrate the entire society. Additionally, by virtue of representation Indian women who exist in this space began to understand their place in this world and *Femina* is now a place that occupies a fluid middle ground between embodied practices and explicit doctrines. Moreover, applying Gaonkar's notion of the social imaginary (2002), through the collective agency of the women who present this magazine and those who consume it, a society is created, given coherence and identity, and also subject to auto-alterations, both mundane and radical, within historical time. Performing a

textual analysis, which allowed me to soak myself in the text and examine the way the magazine represents reality, facilitated the following conclusions. First, this magazine like many of its predecessors provides a space/place for Indian women to voice their concerns and in these pages women are validated for each and every role they play; this is the role played by *Femina* in the lives of its readers. Second, the magazine appeals to both genders to promote feminism. In this attempt, *Femina* routinely talks about issues that affect both genders in an effort to bridge the communication gap. Also, girl children are cherished and celebrated, and the pages convey the message that parents now prefer having girls to boys. Furthermore, the magazine provides readers with a variety of careers women could indulge in and also introduces readers to women who are leaders in these areas. Third, with globalization came about the circulation of ideas and identities and as a result Indian women in Mumbai could relate to women in other metropolitan cities around the world. This process of exchange validates, promotes and supports the growing consciousness of the feminist movement in India.

However, there are several limitations in this study. First, there is a limited number of previous research in the study of women's magazines in India and only two studies done specifically on *Femina*. Furthermore, there were some studies of relevance to this study that are published in the *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, but this journal is not available here either. Hence spending some time in a library at an Indian University might have given me access to journals and more related articles. Second, I could only find 12 issues of this magazine as it is not available in Atlanta and exploring more number of issues would definitely have revealed more themes and confirmed existing ones. *Femina* is also available online, but the past issues could not be accessed through this source either. Third, the process of textual analysis reflects

the researcher's interpretation of the text, which is a matter of perspective, and hence this interpretation too is not absolute.

In this regard, it is important for me to place my biases on the table. Having lived outside India for most of my life, I believe places me in a position of privilege and hence I have not faced the wrath of patriarchy to the degree that other women who do live in India might have. Also, being western educated, places me in the category of the 'other' and hence might color my interpretations. However, this position also gives me an advantage over someone who is unaware of India and the intricacies of the nation and its people.

Future studies therefore need to look into more than six months of issues and could look for some themes that no longer appear in these pages and the new patterns that seem to emerge with time. Also, if time and finances are no constraints it would be extremely useful to visit the *Femina* office in Mumbai and talk to the editor and staff. This would offer great insight into the magazine. In addition, it would be extremely useful to conduct focus groups and ask groups of Indian women (housewives, single women, career women) in Bombay what they think about this magazine. This method would then bolster the textual analysis done by the researcher.

Nonetheless, the study hopes to equip magazine publishers with a better understanding of the market they are catering to; hopes to be part of a series of works by other researchers who have studied women's magazines in developing nations; and hopes to show feminists the world over that how women's magazines can serve as an essential tool to advance woman's stand in society.

In conclusion this study not only applauds those women who are part of the society of *Femina*, but demonstrates how feminism is being translated, transmuted and transfused into future generations of both women and men through the pages of this magazine.

## REFERENCES

- Abu-Lughod, Lila. (1993). *Writing Women's Worlds*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Anst, Philip. (1966). "Personality Determinants of Mass Media preferences." *Journalism Quarterly*, Volume 43, pp. 729-732.
- Appadurai, Arjun. (1996). *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press.
- Ballaster, Ros. et al. (1991). *Women's Worlds – Ideology, Femininity and the Woman's Magazine*. London: Macmillan.
- Bauer, A. Raymond. (March, 1958). "The Communicator and the Audience." *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Volume 2(1), pp. 67-77.
- Beeman, William. (1993). "The Anthropology of Theater and Spectacle," *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Volume 22, pp. 369-93.
- Breckenridge, A. Carol. (1995). *Consuming Modernity: Public Culture in a South Asian World*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Burgoon, Michael, and Burgoon, K. Judee. (1980). "Predictors of Newspaper Readership," *Journalism Quarterly*, Volume 57, pp. 589-596.
- Bhuthalia, Urvashi. (July- August 1997). "The Women's Movement in India: Action and Reflection," *Communique*, Nos. 42-43. Retrieved from the World Wide Web: [http://www.twinside.org.sg/title/india\\_1-cn.htm](http://www.twinside.org.sg/title/india_1-cn.htm).
- Calvacca, Lorraine. (15 May 1994). "Sisterhood is Evolving (Interview with Ms magazine editor-in-chief Marcia Gillespie)." Retrieved from the World Wide Web: [http://global.factiva.com/en/arch/print\\_results.asp](http://global.factiva.com/en/arch/print_results.asp).
- Castoriadis, Cornelius. (1987). *The Imaginary Institution of Society*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Chaudhuri, Maitrayee. (2001). "Gender and Advertisements: The Rhetoric of Globalization," *Women's Studies International Forum*, Volume 24, no. ¾, pp.373-85.
- Durham, Gigi Meenakshi. (May 2001). "Displaced Persons: Symbols of South Asian Femininity and the Returned Gaze in U.S. Media Culture." *Communication Theory*, Volume 11, issue2, pp.201-217.

Durkheim, Emile. (1965). *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. New York: The Free Press.

Ebert, T. (Fall 1988). "The Romance of Patriarchy: Ideology, Subjectivity and Postmodern Feminist Cultural Theory." *Cultural Critique*, pp. 19-57.

Fernandes, Leela. (2000). "Nationalizing 'the global:' Media Images, Cultural Politics and the Middle Class in India." *Media, Culture & Society*, Volume 22, pp.611-628.

Freidson, Elliot. (June, 1953). "Communications Research and the Concept of the Mass," *American Sociological Review*, Volume 18(3), pp. 313-317.

Gaonkar, Parameshwar Dilip. (2002). "Toward New Imaginaries: An Introduction," *Public Culture*, Volume 14.1, pp. 1-19.

Ghadially, Rehana. (1988). *Women in Indian Society*. New Delhi; Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage Publications.

Grewal, I. (1999). "Traveling Barbie: India Transnationality and New Consumer Subjects." *Positions*, Volume 7(3), pp. 799-824.

Grewal, I. and Kaplan, C. (1994). *Scattered Hegemonies – Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Greenfield, Jill and Reid, Chris. (1998). "Women's magazines and the commercial orchestration of femininity in the 1930s: evidence from *Woman's Own*." *Media History*, Volume 4, no. 2, pp.161-174.

Habermas, Jurgen. (1962/1989). "The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere." Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Hall, Stuart. (1975). *Paper Voices*.

Hall, Stuart. (1991). "The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity," in *Culture, Globalization and The World-System*. Binghamton: State University of New York at Binghamton Press.

Hall, Stuart. (1991). "Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities," in *Culture, Globalization and The World-System*. Binghamton: State University of New York at Binghamton Press.

Handel, L.A. (1950). *Hollywood Looks at its Audience*. pp. 113-114. Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press.

Hegde, Radha Sharma. (Fall 1995). "Recipes for Change: Weekly Help for Indian Women." *Women's Studies in Communication*, Volume 18, no. 2, pp. 177-188.

Hegde, S. Radha. (August 1998). "A View from Elsewhere: Locating Difference and the Politics of Representation from a Transnational Feminist Perspective." *Communication Theory*, Volume 8, issue 3, pp. 271-297.

Hermes, Joke. (1995). *Reading Women's Magazines*. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press.

Irene Yang, Fang-chih. (Spring 2004). "International Women's Magazines and the Production of Sexuality in Taiwan." *Journal of Popular Culture*, Volume 37, issue 3, pp. 505 – 513.

Jakobson, R. (1960). "Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics." In *Style in Language*, ed. T Sebeok. pp. 350-77. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

Jill Greenfield and Chris Reid. (Dec. 1998). "Women's Magazines and the Commercial Orchestration of Femininity in the 1930s: Evidence from Women's Own," *Media History*, pp. 161-175.

Johnson, J. David. (June 1983). "A Test of a Model of Magazine Exposure and Appraisal in India." *Communication Monographs*, Volume 50, pp. 148-157.

K. Srilata. (1998). "Feminists Are Modern; Families are Indian: Women's Magazines and the politics of Modernity," in *Burning down the House: recycling domesticity*. pp. 301-25. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

King, W. Charles, and Summers, O. John. (February 1971). "Attitudes and Media Exposure," *Journal of Advertising Research*, Volume 11, no. 1, pp. 26-31.

Kumar, Shanti, and Curtin, Michael. (November 2002). "'Made in India' In Between Music Television and Patriarchy." *Television & New Media*, Volume 3, no. 4, pp. 345-366.

Lauretis, de Teresa. (1984). *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Lee, Benjamín and LiPuma, Edward. (2002). "Cultures of Circulation: The Imaginations of Modernity." *Public Culture*, Volume 14.1, pp. 191-213.

Lii, Ding-Tzann. (1998). "Social Spheres and Public Life: A Structural Origin." *Theory, Culture & Society*, Volume 15(2), pp. 115-135.

Lull, James. (2000). *Media, Communication, Culture – A Global Approach*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Maffesoli, Michel. (1991). "The Ethics of Aesthetics," *Theory, Culture & Society*, Volume 8(1), pp. 7-29.

McRobbie, A. (1996). "More!: New Sexualities in Girls' and Women's Magazines," in J. Curran et al. (eds) *Cultural Studies and Communications*, pp. 172-94. London: Arnold.

Mohanty, Chandra. (2003). *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Mohanty, Chandra. (1984). "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses." *Boundary*, 2 I 2, no.3 or I 3, no.I (spring/fall), pp. 338-358.

Minault, Gail. (Sept. – Oct 1988). "Urdu Women's Magazines in the Early Twentieth Century," *Manushi*, no. 48, pp. 2-9.

Ong, A. (1998). "Colonialism and Modernity: Feminist Re-presentation of Women in Non-Western societies," *Inscriptions*, Volume 3/4, pp.79-93.

Parameswaran, Radhika. (22 March 1996). "Coverage of 'bride burning' in the Dallas Observer: a cultural analysis of the 'Other.'" *Frontiers*, Volume 16, no. 2-3.

Parameswaran, Radhika. (February 1, 2001). "Feminist media ethnography in India: exploring power, gender, and culture in the field." *Qualitative Inquiry*, Volume 7, issue 1.

Parameswaran, Radhika. (May 2001). "Displaced persons: symbols of South Asian femininity and the returned gaze in U.S. media culture." *Communication Theory*, Volume 11, no. 2, pp. 201-217.

Parameswaran, Radhika. (Summer 2001). "Global media events in India: contests over beauty, gender and nation." *Journalism and Communication Monographs*, Volume 3, no. 2.

Parameswaran, Radhika. (August 2002). "Local Culture in Global Media: Excavating Colonial and Material Discourses in National Geographic." *Communication Theory*, Volume 12(3), pp. 287-315.

Parikh, Indira J, and Garg, Pulin, K. (1989). *Indian Women: An Inner Dialogue*. New Delhi; Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage Publications.

Parulekar, Susan. (2001). "Transforming and Imagining Elite Femininity in Fifty Years of Femina Magazine." Retrieved from the World Wide Web: [http://www.cwru.edu/affil/sce/Texts\\_2001/Parulekarptr.html](http://www.cwru.edu/affil/sce/Texts_2001/Parulekarptr.html).

Patil, Vimla. (1997). *My Times – Memoirs*. Delhi: UBS Publishers.

Patil, Vimla. (9/24/04). Personal Communication.

Peter Dahlgren and Sumitra Chakrapani. (1982). "The Third World on TV News: Western Ways of Seeing the 'Other.'" in *Television Coverage of International Affairs*, ed. William C. Adams Norwood, N.J.: Ablex.

- Rajan, Sunder. (1993). *Real and Imagined Women*. London; New York: Routledge.
- Reed, Barbara Straus. (Autumn 90/Winter 91) "Rosa Sonneschein and The American Jewess." *Journalism History*, Volume 17, issue ¾, p. 54.
- Reissman, Leonard. (1954). "Class, Leisure, and Social Participation." *American Sociological Review*, Volume 19, no.1, pp. 76-84.
- Sakamoto, Kazue. (1999). "Reading Japanese women's magazines: the construction of new identities in the 1970s and 1980s." *Media, Culture & Society*, Volume 21, pp.173-93.
- Saran, Sathya. (10/10/2003). Retrieved from the World Wide Web: [http://www.exchange4media.com/content/content.asp?content\\_id=26](http://www.exchange4media.com/content/content.asp?content_id=26),
- Schechner, R. (1985). *Between Theater and Anthropology*. Philadelphia: Univ. Penn. Press.
- Sen, Amartya. (Monday, March 25, 2002). "Does globalization equal westernization?" Retrieved from the World Wide Web: <http://www.theglobalist.com/DBWeb/StoryId.aspx?StoryId=2353>
- Sethi, Mohini Raj. (1999). "Globalization and Women's Movement: Past Compulsions and Future Dilemmas," in *Globalization, Culture and Women's Development*. pp. 333-61. Jaipur: Rawat Publications.
- Simonds, Wendy. (1992). *Women and Self-help Culture*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press.
- Sinha, Kabita. (1990). "Eve speaks to God," in *Women Writing in India*. Volume II, pp. 330-31. New York: Feminist Press at the City University of New York.
- Sreenivas, Mytheli. (Winter 2003). "Emotion, Identity, and the Female Subject: Tamil Women's Magazines in Colonial India, 1890-1940." *Journal of Women's History*, Volume 14, issue 4, p.59.
- Srinivas, Lakshmi. (Jun.1953). "The Active Audience: Spectatorship, Social Relations and the Experience of Cinema in India." *Media, Culture and Society*, Volume 18(3), pp. 313-317.
- Talbot, M. Mary. (1998). *Language and Gender – An Introduction*. Cambridge: Polity Press; Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.
- Talwar, Bharat Vir. (1989). "Feminist Consciousness in Women's Journals in Hindi; 1910 – 1920." in *Recasting Women – Essays in Colonial History*, pp. 204-32. New Delhi: Kali for Women.
- Taylor, Charles. (Winter 2002). "Modern social imaginaries." *Public Culture*, Volume 14.1, pp.91-124.

Taylor, Charles. (2000). "Modernity and Difference" in *Without Guarantees – In Honor of Stuart Hall*. London; New York: Verso.

Tharu and Lalita. (1990). *Women Writing in India*. Volume II. New York: Feminist Press at the City University of New York.

Tomlinson, John. (1991). *Cultural Imperialism: A Critical Introduction*. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Tomlinson, John. (1999). *Globalization and Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Urban, D. Christine. (1980). "Correlates of Magazine Readership." *Journal of Advertising Research*, Volume 20, pp. 73-84.

Turner, V. (1982). *Celebration: Studies in festivity and Ritual*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Inst. Press.

Warner, Michael. (2002). "Publics and Counterpublics." *Public Culture*, Volume 14.1, pp. 49-90.

William, Merrin. (June 1999). "Television is Killing the Art of Symbolic Exchange: Baudrillard's theory of Communication." *Theory, Culture & Society*, Volume 16(3), pp. 119-140.

Winship, Janice. (1987). *Inside Women's Magazines*.

Yang, Fang-Chih Irene. (2004). "International Women's Magazines and the production of sexuality in Taiwan." *Journal of Popular Culture*, Volume 37, issue 3.