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Body Blues and Broken Myths: Menopausal Vulnerability and Politics of Aging in Contemporary Screen Narratives

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Abstract: *A menopausal woman steps into an unnamed self that she was never taught, a self that brims with heat but not of desire, a threshold of transformation and aging bones that marks its way towards the end of a long bleeding journey that was once the body's memorized rhythm. Through Bombay Begums and The Change, contemporary media portrays midlife not as a pause but a redefinition of power and an awakening of self that nurtures rupture, resilience and rebellion thus challenging the ingrained myths encircling "the strong woman" paradigm. In Bombay Begums, the fast-paced urban corporate vista leaves no space for aches, flux and fragility thereby casting the shadow of liability over menopausal shifts and rendering it as a pathological condition that must be sterilized. On the contrary, The Change embraces the radical act of becoming and reimagines menopause as an ecological connection and acceptance of the unvarnished truth that sets a woman free from the cycles that ruled her past. Menopause metamorphically evolves into a form of power that deconstructs the myth of invisibility that shrouds aging and unfurls as a political awakening that fractures the silence and blooms with power. Juxtaposing these narratives from the vantage point of Martha Albertson Fineman's Vulnerability theory, where vulnerability is seen as an inherent part of human embodiment and resilience as the capacity to withstand the vulnerability through just and equitable social institutions, menopause emerges as a sociopolitical metaphor that unravels the myth of the strong tireless woman who endures and leads without faltering. It sets the pace for a new narrative, one not written merely by hormones but from perspectives that blend health, stigma, and human experiences.*

Key Words: *Vulnerability, Politicized awakening of self, Strong Woman, Transformation, Resilience.*

Menopause is a season of both undoing and becoming, where the body is a stranger and a historian simultaneously. Biologically, the fertility of a woman fades with the end of menstruation, and her body slowly shifts to a new identity. This phase is accompanied by faltering memory, inexplicable heat, loss of strength, fragmented sleep, and thundering mood swings. In its wake the body transforms into a new territory, a territory full of challenges that are often marginalized and medicalized. Unlike the celebration of blooming youth and fertility, this transition is a slow unravelling of a once well-known self that does not offer cures or comfort but instead extends an invitation to reckon, reclaim, and rise. Sadly, a woman's journey through this phase is often masked and shrouded in silence and dipped in social stigma.

A woman's life unfurls as she navigates the shifting landscapes of vulnerability – Menstruation, the transition from a little girl into womanhood often veiled in shame and silence, pregnancy, when the fruitfulness of the body is celebrated and guarded, postpartum, a raw realm of



emotional exhaustion and physical depletion, and menopause, the age when wisdom deepens and cultural invisibility descends. Each phase becomes a terrain of meaning and marginalisation not only due to biology but through the social structures that cradle or condemn her. The vulnerable woman is not a symbol of weakness, but signifies that women require resilience to overcome her vulnerability. As Martha Albertson Fineman proposes, vulnerability is an embedded and universal constant in human condition. Fineman challenges the notion of a fully self-sufficient and independent subject, thereby suggesting that all humans are vulnerable in different ways in life. Here, menopause materializes as the confrontation with the universal fragility of embodiment and not as a mere biological fate. Fineman alleges that vulnerability is not a flaw but rather a shared human truth, one moulded and honed by institutional response. Resilience is not born when a woman braves through her hot flashes or sleepless nights, but in systems that choose to see her, strengthen her, and sustain her. Menopause is not an isolated crossing but an opportunity to help create a space for women that value care and collective well-being over individualism. When the body speaks loudly, the society must listen rather than casting a veil of cultural silence. Women must be freed from the strong woman stereotype and the vulnerabilities within each phase of life must be embraced and acknowledged.

Politics of menopause stems from the power to delineate, signify and respond to women's bodies. It is embedded in how the societal structures defines, disciplines, and commodifies aging female bodies. Menopause eludes from a mere biological transition as it shifts into a terrain where culture, healthcare and gendered power intersect; a zone of control, scrutiny, and regulation. Menopause is pathologized by the medical enterprise, rendering the female bodies invisible, unfit and invalid, chiefly in public spaces and professional environments. This medical framing is not neutral as the capitalist enterprises leech their profits from marketing hormone therapy treatments and cosmetic regimes that commodify the aging bodies of menopausal women. Under the scrutiny of Fineman's theory of vulnerability, this commodification of menopause manifests as a politically mediated vulnerability, steered by access to care, support and recognition. Resilience of menopausal women cannot be built independently, but politically enabled or denied by the very institutional systems (medical, cultural, economic etc.) that scaffold or erode her autonomy.

As menopause is politicized through various power structures, it offers a generative space for medical pathologisation, where natural rhythms of change are reframed as chronic diseases. Clinical gaze of menopause cuts, scrutinizes, and describes it in terms of symptoms and deficiencies. In the medical industry, the body is dissociated from the soul and probed in terms of parts rather than a unified whole. The woman loses her identity, her own self and is merely seen as a body on the table that is to be treated for the items on a checklist – mood swings, hot flashes, loss of bone density etc. The natural rite of passage in a woman's life is perceived as a pathological problem to be fixed by hormone treatments and antidepressant pills. The living breathing body becomes a broken machine, the woman a patient and her embodied wisdom slowly fade beneath the icy hum of diagnostic tools, prescribed illusions, and branded cures. Menopause is centered at the intersection of femininity, sexuality, and aging and hence it's quintessential to interpret it through biological, social, and medical paradigms that defines it as an illness. Though biology perceives it as the end of a woman's reproductive cycles, medical discourse turns it into a deficiency syndrome due to the fluctuations in oestrogen levels. Culturally, definitions of the masculine and the feminine emerges from anatomical variations wherein femininity is often defined through the reproductive capacity and the subsequent



expectation to bear and rear children (Ferguson and Parry, 22). The inherent sexuality and sexual desirability in a woman are closely linked to her reproductive potential and the disappearance of this ability triggers the stereotypical views of undesirability and deviancy. The social value of a woman is weighed on her beauty and sexuality which compels women to resist change and aging. Hence, middle aged women have become easy victims of their age and gender who seek medical help to cure their illness and restore their fading youth and fertility. This dread to embrace their change leads to an intensified dependence on HRT or the elixir of youth to counter aging, which in turn boosts the profits of the pharmaceutical industry. In the shadow casted by clinical and capitalist regime, Medical Humanities offers a critical terrain to discern how flesh meets story and illness reframes identity thus granting menopause the chance to speak to an uninformed audience about the aches of the body and yearnings of the soul for the truth. It grants an alternative space where stories can rehumanize bodies and question the sterile detachment of diagnosis. This promising avenue for exploration has encouraged contemporary media to open its doors for the stories of women that were once sidelined and pigeonholed. Lived experiences of women are given depth and recognition in the present screens, in contrast to the former decades when they were cloaked in laughter and shame. Stereotypical imaginings of midlife women as nonproductive neuters in society have been shown in a critical limelight in several mass media platforms. Rewriting menopause fiction from a midlife women's perspective is vital as they provide insight into how women understand their own health and body, a politicized awakening. Media has cleverly adapted to profit off the emerging genre of menopausal narratives by giving meaning to the marginalised untapped tales of menopausal women across the world.

It is in this liminal space that *Bombay Begums* and *The Change* deliver the stories of women in two diametrically opposed cultural backdrops and openly speak about menopause as a volatile condition that breaks the ideal of a strong woman who is invincible. The former is clipped and corporate while the latter is wild and satirical. Alankrita Shrivastava uses *Bombay Begums* to illustrate the double life of Indian women who struggle to meet the gendered expectations at home while excelling in their vocation. It being rooted in the glass towers of ambition and corporate success, perceives menopause as a burden that handicaps the woman in power. Five women, scattered amidst the mayhem and melody of Mumbai, forge their own destinies by navigating their respective personal and professional labyrinths, each with their own maps of dreams and scars. Rani Singh Irani, CEO of Royal Bank of Bombay, tries in vain to mask her menopausal signs so as not to lose her high position and power that is worshipped and quintessential to survive in the fast-paced world of competition. Power grazes against vulnerability as Rani is plagued by hot flashes and heat strokes amidst board meetings, leaving no room for understanding and softness on her behalf. On the other side of the world, *The Change*, penned and birthed by Bridget Christie, frames the pilgrimage of Linda to the silent sanctuaries of Gloucestershire's Forest of Dean, to reignite her soul's flickering flame threatened to be extinguished by her midlife crisis. Linda rediscovers her menopausal identity amongst the mossy, wild and wonderous nature that helps her tame the noose of the self-constricting menopausal stereotypes flagged by mainstream society. The woodland passes her no judgement and offers no cure for manifesting the change surging through her body, which was otherwise considered as a major symptom of a life changing disease by the medical community which required imminent medical intervention. Menopause is freed from the fetters of medicalization and it becomes a phoenix flight to joy, fury, and rebirth. Linda does not pathologize her vulnerability but rather blooms in its wake. The stories of these women repel



the stale scripts of aging, decline and invisibility and charge the flatline of menopausal narratives with pulse, aches, and poetry.

These narratives invite speculation on what it means to own the constantly evolving feminine bodies within the narrow walls of a prejudiced society that equates worth with youth and fertility. These screen texts enrich the field of cinematic storytelling by weaving experiences of menopausal women into the fabric of mainstream society thereby compelling an open conversation about sexuality, vulnerability, and change. The silver screen sets the stage for an intersectional understanding of menopause from the vantage points of race, class, and culture. They reveal how menopause is politicized – if muted and stigmatized in capitalist India or revived and spiritualized in rural England – thereby highlighting the need for a feminist politics that redefines this metamorphosis as one of power, not decline.

Bombay Begums: Menopause in Metropolis

In Mumbai, a sprawling canvas that reflects the hues of neon signs and corporate glass towers, Rani Singh Irani (Pooja Bhatt), celebrates her long years as the CEO of the Royal Bank of Bombay while all at once dreading the tremors of her body's new unfolding chapter. The uninvited guest, menopause, pulses through her body like wildfire and Rani struggles in vain to maintain her young and calm façade. Her body betrays her and rips through the veneer of her self-control and consumes her in the heat of a thousand suns. The sterile, controlling, and power-hungry masculine coded world of finance has no way of digesting this transformation. The patriarchal boardroom turns into a theatre of biopolitics, where menopause is politically weaponized – her body's truth jeopardizes her legitimacy in power. Her vulnerability finds no voice amidst the misogynistic patriarchal vultures that awaits to peck on her carcass as soon as she admits defeat.

Rani tiptoes around her ongoing change so as not to awake suspicions regarding her autonomy, power, and authority. The first episode of the series titled "Women Who Run With The Wolves," shows a flustered Rani trying to secure her position as CEO, surrounded by men in suits eager to kick her out. The board plans to advertise the bank by selling her as "the good Indian Housewife who knows how to save money and spend wisely" (44:04-43:58). While Rani begins to speak of strategy, she is besieged by a rising tide of heat, an ebbing anger that she cannot control. The camera zooms in on her, muting out the voices in the boardroom, and the scene suddenly shifts into a bathroom where Rani is seen anxiously splashing cold water, clutching her chest as if her breath was being sucked out by the world, and tries to shove her arm pits against the dryer trying in vain to dry her drenched underarms. (43:00-42:27). This silent revelation of menopause goes unnoticed by her colleagues, who speculate on her having a heart attack, thus eclipsing her vulnerability. This transcends the boundaries of personal discomfort, and demonstrates the systemic dismissal of the aging female agency in the aisles of power. Fineman reads this not as Rani's weakness but as a plea to reframe how institutional frameworks scaffold or rather fail to support the inevitable biological transformations in a woman.

The once poised CEO represses her menopause like a wounded animal, silent and scared. In the world of polished floors and glass ceilings built for the invulnerable subject there is no room for Rani's truth. In the episode "Love," Rani asks for the AC remote to alleviate her rising body temperature and her colleague Deepak promptly passes the comment "I don't think you're thinking straight. I know you're going through mood swings and hot flashes" (20:08 – 20:01); thus, indirectly questioning her capabilities as a CEO, and her vulnerability opens an opportunity for her boss to threaten to replace her instead of lending resilience. The arc of



Rani's life illustrates the unequal distribution of resilience essential to navigate and negotiate institutional pressures while concurrently managing the volatility of the body, relationships, and public gaze.

In "The Bell Jar" episode, Rani's battle with menopause pinnacles into a solemn dilemma between identity and control. Her vulnerability, hidden in the folds of her silks and strategy, struggles to break free. Even after being in the zenith of power, and authority, Rani fails to admit and accept the truth within her body. The stigma of the strong woman in power, the idea of the invincible woman, forces Rani to hide behind closed doors of cold baths and chilled showers. The contrast becomes tragically obvious when her former colleague Devyani, who works as a high official in FCB Asia, labels what Rani will not. "This menopause, it is driving me crazy" (14:11-14:07), she says with dry wit and casual defiance. The moment rips through Rani's taut act of denial and she shrinks beneath the shadow of her silence. On being asked about how she copes with menopause, Rani fervently replies "It hasn't started for me yet." This scene highlights the tension between- a woman owning the space for her evolving body and the other shrinking herself into invisibility. Ironically, Rani who advocates for women empowerment through her welfare schemes for underprivileged women, cowers beneath menopause due to the shame that she associates with it. Fineman's theory resonates through this scene in an undertone: vulnerability is an inherent part of being human, but resilience stems from access to language, care, and cultural institutions. Devyani's candidness is symbolic of her resilience, the strong resolve not to let cultural stigma sideline her narrative. On the other hand, Rani has limited space to be open and free due to her role, her fear and the expectations layered on her to excel – a strong indication that the structural institution has no scaffolding for menopausal leadership. Rani's hesitation to embrace her menopause depicts how political economies of power command bodily erasure for women to lead. The same system that commodifies her during her fertile period, discredits her when menopause settles in. Here, menopause is politicized through capitalist imperatives, framing Rani's body as not merely vulnerable, but invisible unless purged, rectified or negated.

Bombay Begums pulses with vulnerability beneath every fold- beneath the echo of Rani's menopause, the unravelling of Fatima's marriage, the stigma laden survival of Lily, the closeted queerness of Ayesha in an abusive workspace, and even beneath Shai's bewilderment in the tender chaos of adolescence. Each woman embarks on a journey, brimming in self-doubt and colliding with the rigid institutional frameworks that were never built to shelter their truths. Rani shrivels up and buries her change in fear of the world that punishes visible atrophy. Fatima, castigated for her ambition and fertility, gets ensnared in a system that commercializes reproductive rights and discards it at her own will. Lily, silhouetted in the shame of her livelihood as an escort, fights social stigma and invisibility for a fair and just life. Ayesha navigates her queerness in the so-called progressive world which collapses into a realm brimming with discriminating stereotypes and exploitations. Shai, though far from the clutches of adult power plays, absorbs every split second of the drama surrounding her which reflects the vulnerabilities that she will inherit in her future. The stories of these women reflect the universality of vulnerability, a profound human truth shaped by the social structures that surround it. The myth of the strong invulnerable woman, the flawless woman, unravels through the vulnerable narratives of these begums. Their strength stems from their fragility, their vulnerability, that is revealed in the finale "A Room Of One's Own," resonating Woolf's dream of a space where a woman has the freedom to etch herself into history. *Bombay Begums* commences into an ode to Fineman's theory, recognizing that all human bodies bleed, break,



ache, and age and that resilience stems not from safety but through a shared recognition of vulnerabilities inherent in everyone.

The Change: A menopausal Moonfall

The Change blooms beneath ancient trees and forsaken rivers, a brittle battle against the tide of dissolving memories, a quest to tame the echoes of a woman's rising autumn. Linda (Bridget Christie), one amongst millions, fractures under the weight of being a people pleaser and her unfulfilled needs fuelled by the menopausal fire in her prompts her to break free from the neat little shapes that women often shrink themselves into -a mother, a wife, a dependable worker. Defined by these roles for so long, she slowly vanishes, blurring the lines of her identity. Linda resolves to reclaim her own time, her own body, and her own space, not as a caregiver but as herself. As the body embarks on a new moonfall adventure, her desires, gathering dust like shelved books, rewilds like wildflowers on concrete.

The series opens with Linda's fiftieth birthday party, hosted by her husband in their own suburban backyard. Her husband holds court, the chatter hums, laughter echoes, glasses clink while Linda, invisible and sidelined, sits in between her kids who mocks her with teenage chagrin for her loud swallowing. Overwhelmed by her own change, she instantly seeks reassurance from her own sister Siobhan who dismisses Linda's concerns with a brushstroke of minimization and advises her to take up medical help. The scene aptly portrays how vulnerability intensifies when met with denial and dismissal.

Linda: "Hey, Siobhán, come here a minute."

Siobhán: "What, can't walk now you're 50? Be dribbly wees next."

Linda: "Do I swallow loudly? Listen."

Siobhán: "Have you taken your medication?"

Linda: "I'm not on medication."

Siobhán: "Exactly." (*The change*, ep.1, 1:12–1:15)

This scene clarifies the ultimate truth that unacknowledged vulnerability eventually turns into alienation. Linda's attempt to express her bodily change, her cry to "listen", yearns for a witness who relates and not for pills or diagnosis. Her tender plea of confusion meets with sarcastic dismissal rather than concern. Her big sisters reply resonates an icy tone, reflecting the age-old conditioning of women to internalized and medicalize their health struggles. Fineman's universal vulnerability highlights how refusal to recognize the vulnerable state, especially in women, reinforces social isolation and lack of institutional support. Here, Linda's menopausal grief is met with dry humour and stoic dismissal from her own sister, emphasizing the staleness of a once familiar relationship that offered comfort and refuge. This act of gendered vulnerability, layered with her family's indifference expose the exclusion triggered by systems of care and intimacy. Linda's quest for resilience is born from this very moment of invisibility. Linda's estrangement with her own self intensifies when Linda visits the doctor with an array of symptoms -dementia, osteoporosis, anxiety, depression, cardiovascular disease- all of which she fears marks the onset a serious illness (Ep. 1, 7:27–7:53). The doctor, rather than exploring the complications, mechanically surmises it as the onset of menopause and prints out a factsheet for her, thereby reducing a profound change into an illness that spares no space for the emotional vitality of the woman present. The medical institution responds to Linda's vulnerability with a disembodied simplicity instead of solidarity. The most piercing moment unfolds with Linda fails to identify with her change, a transformation that she had not anticipated, an absence from her own body. Menopause looms before her like a wild thicket with no way out. It stirs within her the urge to rewrite the prophecy of her own body as she



dusts off her old triumph and sets off into the lap of nature, the forest of dean, to rediscover the time capsule, a metaphor of her own self, that she had hid away in the depths of a sacred tree in the woodlands.

The Change manifests a threshold of transformation, an arena where resilience blooms from vulnerability and silence gains voice. Linda's tattered volumes of chore records, monuments of domestic devotion and the testimony of muted obligation drives into her the realisation of her own silent depletion and decay. Linda's notebooks mirror a life centered around the needs of others, a gendered standard of self-sacrifice. Her resilience, embedded in the needs of her family, erases her own self, her identity, and her needs.

Simone De Beauvoir's reflection on housework as a domestic labour trap speaks directly to Linda, who was stuck in the futility of domestic repetition where nothing ascends but only repeats in monotony. Linda bookmarks the quote and sends it off to her husband to assert her need for self-care, a silent explanation for her departure. However, he, failing to grasp its depth, reads it aloud to his buddies as if it were a thing of novelty, something to be laughed and forgotten for its idiocy (Ep. 4, 6:42-7:10). Sisyphus's absurdity becomes an inspiration for Linda to walk away from the stone and into the lap of nature.

In the hush of the lush green woods, Linda begins her sacred unravelling where the forest strips her of her former self and thrusts her into meeting her own self, a person bereft of roles and expectations. The strong, independent, and diligent motifs behind a dedicated wife, mother and sister falls apart as Linda slowly accepts the truth of her new body. Fineman's universal vulnerability theory flows through the series as an undercurrent, echoing through the narratives of Joy and the Eel sisters. Linda's camaraderie with the other menopausal women becomes a chorus of reclamation. The transformation of the traditional Eel festival unfolds like a reckoning, where all the masked vulnerabilities of women are dragged into the open and stripped bare of its stereotypes. As Linda, joy and the Eel sisters prep for the onset of the festival, they share their own wounds, with each one tending bruises of names they were tarnished with but never chose. "*Mutton dressed as lamb*," "*gold digger*," "*slut*," "*ball breaker*," "*prick teaser*"- the names cascade like stones, not uttered in shame but in bold defiance. (Ep .5,7:01-8:23) These insults transgress mere personal issues as they are political, sharpened weapons of control, wielded by a world that is threatened by women's transformations. Vulnerability does not merely arise from body and age but manifests through language, how words are used to create narratives that renders one fragile. The women jointly exhume what Fineman describes as the social organization of vulnerability which perceives certain lot, particularly women, as perilous, unstable, and therefore be chastened, regulated, or silenced. To answer this, Fineman paves a way forward, not by repudiating the vulnerability, but by erecting communal structures that value shared experiences and responses which asserts resilience as not a solitary quest but a combined ritual where each story becomes a new milestone.

Vulnerability, viewed from the perspective of Fineman, is an inherent and constant aspect of humans as embodied beings, often swayed by the currents of dependence, support, and decay. The capacity to withstand vulnerability, resilience, is habitually inequitably shared. It is governed by access to support systems, legal acknowledgments and cultural frameworks that sustains few and abandons the rest. Linda's life in the margins of suburban kitchen, her marital numbness and domesticated motherhood lacked the scaffolding to ease her transition. Rendered invisible, unintelligible, and forgetful, menopause laid bare all her vulnerabilities but offered no space for resilience to grow. Conversely, in the forest resilience takes root amidst women



who drift beyond the frames of womanhood. These women extend Linda the invitation to become and not return, to honour her changes rather than hide. It resonates with Fineman's visions of a world that welcomes the vulnerability with shared responsibility, care, and recognition instead of denial and marginalisation.

The transformed Eel Festival emerges as the material manifestation of this philosophy. The performance is of women, by women and for women. The festival becomes a psalm to the transitions faced by a woman throughout her life, the ritualistic stations of change being puberty, menopause, and rebirth. The crowning of Linda as the Eel queen by the non-binary Ryan, the thread of gender expansiveness, beside the earthly waters, marks Linda's resurrection.

“Linda as you make your journey through menopause, we baptise you with immersion, using the cleansing and healing powers of water, signifying death burial and resurrection. We celebrate your rebirth as you share these magical waters with the eel, as it makes its way back to the Sargasso Sea, back to its destiny.” (Ep.6, 2:40-3:09)

Linda's descend into the water signals the political act of reclamation, an embracing of her womanhood. This feminist ritual of renewal renounces the pathologization of menopause by the medical industry. The ritualistic festival resonates a counter politics which resists the commodification and silence of menopausal women. Her immersion, the feminist sacrament, is a structural counter narrative that celebrates her vulnerability and acknowledges the wisdom born within her. Metaphorically the eels' return to the sargasso sea becomes her destiny, her return to self. Linda's crowning marks her as the vessel through which all womanly transitions are honoured. Crafted by the women, Linda's iridescent crown of feathers proves the journey she has weathered from invisibility into gleaming light, each plume reciting the songs of forgotten memories and swallowed thoughts. She carries forth the ritual of metamorphosis by crowning three others who are on the cusp of becoming – Willow, a young girl blooming in puberty, then Sarah, caught amidst the flames of menopause and finally Jackie who embraces rebirth after relinquishing loss and grief. Linda crowns them not with caution and warning but with a gentle blessing – “May all your transitions be joyful” (Ep.6, 12:00 – 23:55). This single sentence bears the weight of all the insults that weighed women down over the years and it breaks the vow of silence enshrouded in shame. In Fineman's terms, it becomes the attribution of care, of understanding, of meaning, of dignity and resilience.

The Change, an anthem of vulnerability, closes with Linda's unapologetic transformation wherein she embraces the fragility within her. It is not the breakdown of a strong woman but an unburdening of her soul. Linda unfurls her petals in the soil of vulnerability, rooted in resilience. Linda's journey challenges the politics of menopause by reconfiguring power from social institutions to community. It disrupts the hegemonic clinical gaze and repositions menopause as a feminist reawakening. Fineman's lens measures her strength not through her capacity to contain the cracks, but on how deeply she lets herself breathe in her own unravelling amidst the untamed wild, absolving waters and boundless sisterhood. No longer cloaked by the skin of duty and silence, she drifts into something older, wilder. Armour less and free, Linda rises as a strong woman, reforged by her vulnerability.

Temporal Bodies: Rethinking Menopause

Menopause, a shadow in the footnotes of womanhood, emerges as an open frontier to the convergence of two vastly different cultural screen narratives, *Bombay Begums*, and *The Change*. These powerful metaphorical narratives peel away the layers of silence flanking menopausal bodies, reframing them not as a decline into dust but as insightful and aflame with



light. Menopause emerges as a site of political strife and renewal, the frontier where identity, control and power collide. In these cultural celluloid echoes, menopause dawns as a collective reckoning, where bodily riot brushes against systemic disregard. They illuminate the politics of menopause, exposing the systems that gag, ostracize, or uphold women as they traverse through the uncharted domains of selfhood.

Menopause experiences of women vary vastly from person to person, region to region. Some women perceive it as a blissful blessing; some consider it as an enlightening transition whereas some perceive it as a medical illness that needs to be treated. In *The Change*, an ecofeminist odyssey, menopause ignites the spark that prompts Linda to rediscover herself in the wilderness where domesticity is shed and mythic rebirth ensues. Antithetically, in *Bombay Begums* menopause gets ensnared in the shackles of corporate ambition as Rani tries to bury her symptoms under professionalism and performance. Their resilience rises from the ruins of expectations – an unmaking of the strong woman. The allegorical woman of strength, the mountain that weathers every storm, the woman that conquers, conceals, and endures becomes a fallible whisper in these narratives. As Rani and Linda fracture under the pressure of leading and nurturing—repressing the inferno within that eventually breaks, speaks, and becomes—they dismantle the strong woman pillar, brick by brick. These screen testimonies illuminate a much deeper and radical form of strength seeded in vulnerability, relationality, and truth.

Bombay Begums, set within the pulsing chaos of Mumbai, portrays menopause in hushed conversations cloaked in secrecy and silence. The Indian gaze interprets menopause as an erasure, a retreat from the ideals of youth and fertility. The declining relevance of the body is swapped with wisdom and respect. A woman wears the mantle of subdued power like Kunti after the wars – powerful yet reclusive, holding onto unsaid secrets in her body, her passions eclipsed by duty. Echoes of menopause chase Rani despite her futile attempts to hide her hot flashes with icepacks and strategic silence. In a culture that tethers sexual desirability and motherhood to womanhood, menopause foretells a loss of relevance, vitality, and power. Conversely, *The Change*, woven into the wild British thickets, address menopause with subversive humour and rustic metaphors. The western perception of menopause stigmatizes middle aged women as unattractive, messy, and invisible. The legend of Hecuba, once an empress, now a spectral – her pain, rage and sorrow of her transformation was rendered paltry and hysterical. Linda's metamorphosis substantially subverts the invisibility and hysteria veiled around menopause and the arc of the series, set amidst pagan reflections and fabled terrains, creates a haven for eccentricity, self-introspection, and mystical rebirth. The gap between the two cultural screen narratives borders not on simple east vs. west paradigms but explores how each culture holds and denies space for women to transform and age visibly, vulnerably, and verbally.

Fineman's vulnerability and resilience theory open the doors to a more nuanced perspective of menopause and aging. They exemplify how resilience of menopausal women is politically scaffolded. However, these narratives reinstate menopause as a space of agency and expression. Menopause is freed from the chains of pathology and viewed as a shared embodiment that binds all of womanhood. The sweat-stained silks of Rani and the river baptism of Linda both emblemize the strength that refuses to masquerade as indestructible. The courage to name and speak what hurts and to rebuild from there, gives birth to true resilience. These narratives are not mere reflections of personal turmoil, but testimonies that reclaim menopause as a political terrain, where vulnerability fuels resistance, and resilience is demanded as a right and not a privilege. These gripping stories on the silver screen help to forge a new culture, thus



rewriting the politics of aging that holds, honours, and celebrates every wrinkle, rage, and release.

In this world where media constructs the reality, it is important for menopausal women's voices to be heard, noted and broadcasted, not as fleeting whispers or cruel jokes but as honest narratives to clearly understand menopause. Mass media's ability to manipulate interpretations renders it an ideal instrument to rewrite and destigmatize women's menopausal experiences. Other than honouring women's bodies and transformations, these depictions help to let the world in -husbands, sons and daughters must witness the tides moving through their wives, mothers, and themselves. Empathy stems from knowledge and understanding; from empathy, care buds. Menopause is not exile but a blessed transformation and it is time for women to own menopause, unapologetically, in their own pace and style. By foregrounding menopause as the locus of embodied vulnerability, these serials subvert the existing menopausal lampoons and depicts how resilience is not defiance of the decline but the malleable, interdependent strength that arises when women repossess their own transitions overtly.

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