

# QUESTIONS FOR FEMINIST FILM STUDIES

TEJASWINI NIRANJANA

This paper grew out of my conviction that the current critical practice of film studies in India ought to more centrally include (a) modes of critical cultural analysis inspired by feminism, (b) theorization of gender questions and/ in their intersections with other crucial political issues of our time, and (c) investigation of film studies questions in relation to women (relating to cinematic apparatus, spectators, textual analysis, etc.). The paucity of serious feminist film criticism in our context is all the more apparent when we see the work being done in related areas such as literary studies or historiography.

This is not, however, a call for the formation of a separate branch of film studies but an attempt to take stock of interventions which have already been made, and pose some further questions to be addressed. I would like to make an attempt to list out the preoccupations of a few contemporary feminist writers, and to see if there are any commonalities among them. The four writers are Shohini Ghosh, Dulali Nag, Lalita Gopalan and Patricia Uberoi, and their essays cover popular cinema in Hindi, Telugu and Bengali. While Ghosh and Gopalan examine films from the 1980s and 90s, Uberoi talks about a film from the 60s and Nag about one from the 50s.

Why these essays? Not simply because they are by women, but because I think all four writers attempt to frame their interventions in relation to the women's movement as a socio-political movement, and implicitly or explicitly theorise their concerns as contributing to the development of a feminist perspective.

How are these different from the earlier writings on cinema by Indian feminists? They appear to be part of the professionalization or formalization of film studies as well as women's studies as disciplines in their own right. The writers are located in a specifically academic space, and therefore follow certain protocols which distinguish them from more explicitly activist interventions such as those to be found in the women's

journal *Manushi* from the late 1970s on. However, as I will try to show, the concerns of professionalized feminist critics are not very different from those who wrote about cinema in the earlier phase of the post-70s women's movement, although they may be addressed today in a somewhat different vocabulary or with different emphasis.

Some of the recurring concerns in recent criticism appear to centre around questions of *the popular*, of *female agency* (being in action or exerting power; working towards an end), and *the state*. Special problems have always been posed for feminism and other forms of political questioning (such as marxism, for example) by the popular, which is seen today as including not only fiction or theatre but also music, cinema, and television. The problems have to do with an understanding of the popular as that which helps secure women's subordination but also that from which they seem to derive pleasure and sustenance; in other words, that which seems to endorse and perpetuate existing inequalities is also that which appears to inform women's deepest desires. There is a somewhat different trajectory in India, however, to the framing of popular culture in relation to women. This is a trajectory that goes from nineteenth-century nationalism and the making of a colonial, English-educated middle class to the formation of the post-colonial nation state and its ruling elite, a trajectory in which women's participation (as singers, dancers, storytellers, spectators) in popular culture came to be disavowed in the desire for reforming and remaking the normative Indian Subject.

If we are to examine, then, the history of the interest in the popular, we would be able roughly to characterise the nationalist critique of women's popular culture in the following terms: it is "bad for you"—i.e. the woman, it corrupts, makes unchaste, attacks virtue; it **does not** tell you how to properly conduct yourself. As Sumanta Bannerjee points out in the case of Bengal, educated men's discussions of women's emancipation often hinged on the weaning away of their wives and daughters from the forms of popular culture that were "beginning to be associated in the minds of the bhadralok with the 'licentious and voluptuous tastes' of the... 'vulgar' populace".<sup>1</sup>

If women's relationship to popular culture occupied an important place in the formation of the national-modern, it is not surprising that the critique of the national-modern (from the 70s onwards, to give it a rough periodization, and including both an earlier and a later phase), while investigating the place of women in that formation, should also address this relationship, even as it figured it differently. Feminist and left critiques in the 1970s and 80s of women's popular culture suggest that it reinforces the dominant ideology and women's subordination, endorses existing stereotypical notions of masculinity/ femininity, and **does** tell you how you should be.

Thus the question of women's identification, not simply with a character but with situations and subject-positions, is seen as crucial in both nationalist (national-modern) and early feminist (incipient critique of national-modern) critiques. There is in both a paradoxical notion of the power of popular culture (women succumbing to its lures) combined with women wanting to be like their popular cultural representations (not through an active exercising of their agency but because they are imbued with false consciousness). As we shall see, this notion persisted through much of the film criticism of the first ten to fifteen years of the third-phase women's movement in India. In this period, we do not find much writing on cinema, since many of the interventions were in an oral mode. A few journals, however, consistently published articles and film reviews on women and cinema. The discourse on women and films was part of a larger discourse about how to analyse women's subordination, and was thus related to campaigns against eve-teasing, obscenity of hoardings in public places, unwarranted exposure of women's bodies in advertisements, etc. The focus was on **images** of women and **roles** of women; their evaluation was in terms of negative or positive portrayals.

Here I will briefly discuss some of the reviews and articles published in *Manushi*, a "journal of women and society", from 1979 onwards and continuing through the 80s and the 90s. After the mid-1980s, the *Manushi* reviews of films are mainly by Ruth Vanita and Madhu Kishwar, the founding editors, but before that time several women (including some like Rajeswari Sunder Rajan and Uma Chakrabarty who are now reputed

feminist scholars) wrote about films, with the journal sometimes publishing as many as four film reviews per issue.

In its first issue (January 1979), *Manushi* published an editorial statement, "Why *Manushi*", in which was declared the intention to counter "the systematic distortion of the life, situation and image of women", and the "trivialization" of women's issues by the mass media.<sup>2</sup> The space devoted to this question in the statement, and the amount of attention paid to cinema in this and subsequent issues of the journal, signifies the seriousness with which feminists attempted to address the problem of women and popular-culture. The emphasis, however, was not so much on the female spectator as on the film and its "ideology". In an article entitled "Women in Indian Films—Another Commodity?", it was suggested that the "commercial cinema" was "the most powerful ideology" created by capitalism for "keeping women in their place" (p. 47)<sup>3</sup>. Issue # 2 (March—April 1979) had a film review article by Anu and Mini titled "Old Poison in New Bottles" [a review of *Saaajan Bina Suhagan*, *Humara Sansar*, *Swarag Narak* and *Junoon*], while issue # 5 (May—June 1980) carried reviews under the heading "Laying New Traps for Women" [the films discussed here were *Khubsoorat* ("Signs of Crisis?"), *Aap ke Deewane* ("The Family Destroys All"), *Naukar* ("Guidebook for Husbands") and *Sparsh* ("Glamorizing Social Injustice" )]. While these reviews invoked the images of "poison" and "traps", yet others talked about "oppression" and "manipulation". In Issue # 6 (July—August 1980), we find an account of the feminist campaign against the Rajesh Khanna starrer *Red Rose*, and a review of the film along with a few others, with the overall title "Oppressors as Heroes". The piece concludes with the slogan: "BAN RED ROSE! BOYCOTT FILMS THAT INSULT WOMEN!"<sup>4</sup>

Other reviews drew attention to the picturisation of marriage and family in contemporary Hindi films. A review in issue # 7 of *Insaaf ka Tarazu*, *Kashish*, *Albert Pinto ko Gussu Kyon Aata hai*, *Oh Bewafaa* and *Aanchal* bore the heading "Prescribing marriage as a Magic Cure" (pp. 58-62), and a review of *Masoom* is criticised for being a "sickly sentimental sloppy family drama".<sup>5</sup> The idea that women viewers in particular were being targeted by "sentiment" recurs in *Manushi* articles on television as well, as in

Nirupama Dutt's piece on *Buniyuaad*, which according to her "makes people wooly headed and sentimental rather than make them sit up and think", this being the main reason for its success.<sup>6</sup> This idea, of women being rendered weak by the cultural forms which specifically target them, has a long genealogy in feminist criticism, going at least as far back as Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792).

The critic thus has to berate the "ordinary woman" who finds pleasure in these forms, suggesting that it is not in the best interest of the woman to do so, for if she knew what was good for her, she wouldn't read or watch these books / films. Part of the criticism stems from the argument that these films bear no resemblance to "reality" and therefore mislead viewers (women among them) about the true nature of the world they live in. In an otherwise appreciative article on the "man of tomorrow" as represented by the film star Aamir Khan in *Qayarnat se Qayamut Tak*, Ruth Vanita mentions the "gratuitous violence faced by the lovers", since the film shows "all strangers" as "ruffians and potential rapists". The author concludes with the statement that "This certainly does not correspond to Indian reality".<sup>7</sup> In another article, this time on the film *Parinda*, the same writer speaks of the film's "naked distortion of reality" which is "an insult to the viewers".<sup>8</sup> We find in many of the articles and reviews published in *Manushi* a concern with **realism** as able to guarantee both the 'film's aesthetics (truth to life) and its politics (correct representations of reality leading to the formulation of "real" resolutions to the problems faced by women). A similar concern is to be seen in the Deep Focus articles of the early 90s by J. Geetha, Shoma Chatterji and others, who decried the passivity and submissiveness of Indian women as portrayed in films. The one feminist critic who attempted at the time to problematize our assumptions about the merits of realistic cinema was Susie Tharu, in her article on the reality effects of women-centred film (focussing on Jabbar Patel's *Subah/Umbartha*, starring Smita Patil).<sup>9</sup> This kind of intervention was not followed up by other critics, and we do not see similar discussions among feminists about realism or cinematic genre in general until the late 1990s.

While films have remained a persistent focus of discussion, although mostly casual, in many feminist gatherings, we notice a renewed scholarly interest in popular

cinema (and film studies in general) in the mid to late 90s. At the MIDS workshop on Tamil cinema and politics in August 1997, questions of gender, although not always foregrounded in the presentations, came up time and time again. In the present decade, several essays in anthologies (on legal studies, on the representation of women in artistic practices, on sexuality and the body) and in the *Economic and Political Weekly* have discussed films from feminist perspectives. Following the Media and Gender workshop organised by Anveshi/ CSCS in Hyderabad in 1997, a special issue of the *Journal of Arts and Ideas* will carry articles on women and cinema.

I now turn my attention to a few of these recent interventions in an attempt to identify their central concerns and mark their continuities and discontinuities with earlier discussions of women in/ and films. I begin with Dulali Nag's "Love in the Time of Nationalism", an essay on the Bengali film *Agnipariksha* (1954).<sup>10</sup> Nag's intention is to look for "the pluralist popular voice speaking from within the discourse of nationalism" which will be a "site of resistance" to homogenising ideology (p. 779) ; she wants to represent "a popular imagination of woman" which displays "greater autonomy" for women than that allowed by the nationalist dichotomies of home/ world. Nag sets out, therefore, to examine "the popular cinematic construction of desirability in Bengali middle class women" (p. 779), focussing on the image of Suchitra Sen. It is Nag's contention that "a dream resolution to some real social-cultural crisis" is presented in popular cinema, the crisis here being one related to nationalism and the resolution being the specific definition of "gender roles" offered in the film's narrative by the character of Suchitra Sen (p. 780):

...this popular image of a desirable woman subverts the elite nationalist construction of a woman as the repository of cultural authenticity. Popular cinema, as Nandy points out, is "only a distorted history of our own desires, lived out by others". Bengali popular cinema shows up the desires of Bengali elites in a convex mirror, producing an image the elites have always hastened to disown (p. 780).

The reiteration of the world "popular" in Nag's analysis thus far indicates her concern to foreground the desires and cultural artefacts she describes by that term, but also serves to confuse the issue of whose exactly is the "popular". If on the one hand, the "popular dreams/ films of Calcutta are thus the dreams of those displaced from a rural life" (p. 783)—(Is the displacement voluntary or involuntary? How much does this depend on the class background of the displaced person?)—and thus *including* the elite who wish to disown their desires as depicted in popular cinema, on the other hand, Nag speaks about a "space of popular urban subaltern culture, autonomous of the elite nationalist discourse of the 19th century" which "was gradually forming in Calcutta" (p. 787). What is not evident is whether the middle class is considered elite or subaltern. Since this analysis of *Agnipariksha* seeks to understand the construction of middle class femininity, it would seem important to be clear on this point. Towards the end of her essay, however, Nag does indicate more clearly that for her the opposition is between "elite" and "middle class".

The exercise of female agency in the film is another key concern of Nag's. She connects this to the expression of desire by the central female character of the film, which in providing us with "a woman's eye view" of patriarchy releases in the process "certain repressed emotional energies which it tries hard to tame in the conclusion" (p. 781). Nag mentions that the desire is manifested in a "social form" (is desire then pre—existing, innate, perhaps universal?) within its political-historical context, rather sweepingly referred to as urbanisation and the formation of the middle class "from the 19th century onwards". We shall see in the discussion of Patricia Uberoi's essay how the problem of envisioning desire as socially and historically constructed shows up once again in the strain between situated historical analysis and textual analysis.

In "Dharma and Desire, Freedom and Destin: Rescripting the Man-Woman Relationship in Popular Hindi Cinema", her essay on *Sahib, Bibi aur Ghulam*, Uberoi argues that the underlying problematics addressed by popular cinema has to do with eroticism, in the face of different kinds of repression (p. 150).<sup>11</sup> The argument is hinged around the binaries of Dharma / Desire, Freedom / Destiny as seen in mate-selection.

What is not clear, as the author cites "normative Hindu understanding" in support of her claim, is whether these are oppositions created by the films, drawn from Indian society, or produced by the writer for mapping both Indian cinema and Indian society. Duty is seen as social, desire as individual. Both notions—society and individual—are somewhat unproblematically used, so that desire cannot be seen as other than "individual", or duty as anything other than "social". Taking issue with critics who have emphasised the film's portrayal of feudalism in decline, Uberoi relegates the social to a "backdrop". The film, she argues, is "not a treatise on feudalism but a treatise on 'love'" (p. 153). *SBG*'s "message", she suggests, is about "significant relationships" (she proceeds to map the important ones in the narrative), not about feudal society. While the essay and the account of the four main relationships is replete with references to the social context of the narrative, Uberoi's *analytical terms* (including the references to "a distinctively South Asian corporeal aesthetic" which is manifested in the film through a "podoerotics") suggest an unchanging society.<sup>12</sup> The insistence on seeing the social only as "backdrop" is a little puzzling, and can only derive from the transparent opposition between men-women and society, between love and feudalism. Perhaps it is possible instead to think of the film as exploring love *during* feudal decline and the emergence of new social / material relationships; possible to understand "feminine desire" not as some universal essence waiting to be liberated but as existing in distinct modes in distinct historical periods.

In Uberoi's essay we see once again an emphasis on the popular (popular cinema here becomes an anthropological category—used to refer metonymically to the problems of Indian society itself), on female agency (in the discussion of the characters played by Waheeda Rehman and Meena Kumari), usually with reference only to sexual agency. Once again, we see the difficulty of producing film analysis which integrates specific plot and narrative with historical conjuncture.

The cinematic representation of the female body is linked by Lalita Gopalan to the film industry's relationship with the state. In a recent essay she argues that "Indian cinematic materiality, especially editing" is shaped by this relationship, adding that what

gets played out through images of the female body on screen" are the contradictions between the industry's stake in "spectatorial pleasure" and the state's desire in forming "national taste through censorship" (p. 124-25).<sup>13</sup> According to Gopalan, the code regarding obscenity which governs Indian cinema is manifested in "the cinematic mechanism of coitus interruptus" which she describes as the withdrawal of the camera at moments when heterosexual passion has to be explicitly depicted in the narrative. She includes as examples the intercutting of kisses with landscape shots, the extra-diegetic shots of flowers or thunder, and extreme close-ups of parts of the female body (p. 126). The camera's withdrawal in itself becomes the source of "surplus pleasure" (p. 129).

Gopalan argues further that while some sequences of coitus interruptus show the contradictory relationship between the state and the film industry, yet others are more "collaborative" (p. 129). The latter, contends Gopalan, "emerge as hegemonic assertions of Hindu nationalism" in a context where such nationalism is on the rise. Through a reading of *Qayamat se Qayamat Tak*, she points out in the closing sequence the temple, endowed with the state's authority, functions as a "master-signifier" that suggests "Hindu patriarchal elements" (pp. 135-36).

For feminist critics looking to shape a sophisticated methodology for reading Indian popular cinema, Gopalan's notion of coitus interruptus offers a useful conceptual handle for talking about cinematic materiality. Where Gopalan's argument seems strained is when she tries to relate the concept to "the functioning of Hindu nationalist hegemony" (p. 136). This essay too, like the ones discussed earlier, falters integrating specific textual reading with a larger social and political argument, partly because the elements of the latter are presented as self-evident rather analytically demonstrated. In another essay ("Avenging women..."), however, Gopalan makes an argument for "formal textual analysis" as proposed by (Western) feminist film theory in order to understand "the articulation of sexual difference" in film.<sup>14</sup> The only "Indianness" Gopalan sees in this cinema has to do with how the censorship rules of the state shape cinematic representation. While in this, essay as well as the previous one she stresses the need to theorize "the presence of the State" in discussing Indian cinema and its spectators, she

seems to place far too much emphasis on censorship as the sole pressure on such representation. Ironically, the most interesting part of her *Avenging Women* essay is not especially concerned either with the state or censorship but with trying to understand the appeal of what she calls 'aggressive woman' films. Among these are the Hindi films *Pratighat* (1987) and *Zakhmi Aurat* (1988) and the Telugu film *Police Lock-up* (1992). Gopalan points to how a "miscarriage of justice", manifested in the state's "inability to convict the rapist", marks the narrative turn which allows the sexual/ judicial victim to become "an avenging woman" (p. 44).

Gopalan addresses an important problem encountered by feminist criticism when a film presents us with a seemingly progressive political position, but through a mode of representation which may have a very different impact on a section of the audience than one of helping them identify with such positions. As in *Pratighat* for instance, which features rape or disrobement scenes in the narrative (apparently in a criminalization of rape) while simultaneously prompting sadistic—voyeuristic pleasure (p. 48). On the other hand, Gopalan argues that a film like *Zakhmi Aurat* which has been severely criticised for "offering an improbable resolution to rape" (the heroine gets rapists castrated) is actually not attempting to be realistic but staging "fantastical possibilities" of those realities (pp. 49-50). A similar argument is proposed by Shohini Ghosh in her reading of *Anjaam* which we will shortly discuss.

Although rape-revenge narratives do not provide "positive models for feminist utopias", Gopalan contends that they "stage the aggressive and contradictory contours of sexual identity and pleasure that in turn throw up aggressive strands of feminism" (p. 54). The suggestion here seems to be that these cinematic representations in a sense produce certain kinds of feminism through the effects they have on spectators. What this argument fails to account for is the impact of the last two decades of the women's movement on cultural production in general and cinema in particular. It is possible that the media representations of the women's movement enables certain new popular cinematic modes of showing aggressive women, even if they are not modes endorsed by many feminists.

The "strange pleasures" offered to female spectators by films featuring 'deviant women' is an important concern of Shohini Ghosh's article on the figure of the female outlaw, "Deviant Pleasures and Disorderly Women", a reading of *Bandit Queen* counterposed with one of *Anjaam*.<sup>15</sup> Pointing to the blanket rejection of popular cinematic representations of women by feminists and the lack of criticism of "art" films, Ghosh attempts to define "spaces of resistance within largely conformist texts" (p. 150). In doing so, Ghosh suggests that we need not be overtly concerned about women identifying with deviant or outlaw figures as role models, since "identification very rarely leads to imitative action" and "process of identification are complex, conflicting and shifting" (p. 153).

Discussing *Bandit Queen*, Ghosh makes a valuable criticism of the valorisation of the realist aesthetic which compels us to characterise the film's representations in terms of truth (to life) and authenticity (p. 155). In Ghosh's opinion, the filmmaker's emphasis on "external reality" does not allow us to "glimpse...subjective processes". Thus, unable to understand Phoolan's feelings, we cannot "locate exactly where her agency lies" (p. 160), since the mode of representation in the film seems to assume that Phoolan's feelings are "obvious" ones that all women would "naturally" comprehend. Unlike *Bandit Queen*, the film *Anjaam*, working as it does within the idiom of commercial Hindi cinema, constructs a heroine who seems to be the very embodiment of "traditional values". It is only when she encounters the legal system that she begins to understand the processes by which women get victimized. Wrongly jailed for the murder of her husband, the heroine Shivani encounters several women who support her in her bid to gain justice, in the pursuit of which Shivani becomes a serial killer. As Ghosh insists, Shivani is not presented as a feminist (p. 169). In fact the "script works overtime to disavow" a reading of Shivani as a "castrating bitch", by establishing over and over again that she's a "normal" woman (p. 171). Every time Shivani kills someone she invokes her marriage and her family, but "her words are accompanied by actions that contradict the signification of her statements" (p. 172). The heroine's seeming "normalcy" makes her "'deviancy' far more subversive" than those of women outlaws like Phoolan in *Bandit Queen*. Returning to the question of female agency, it is Ghosh's contention that the

representational "excesses" of commercial cinema provide more space for "the expression of subjectivity" than an obsession with realism (p. 174). In addition, she suggests that feminists should be concerned not only with the depiction of female agency on screen but with reclaiming agency for the female spectator, something she feels can be better addressed by rethinking our attitudes towards popular cinema.

In the concluding part of this paper, I will schematically outline the central concerns of contemporary feminist film criticism while raising some questions for future inquiry. The focus will be on three areas: the popular, female agency, and the State.

### **The Popular**

The recurring concern with the popular could be related to the feminist interest in understanding 'commonsense' or the languages of dominance in our society. However, the earlier more critical (although puzzled and slightly despairing) tone, seems to now be modulated into a somewhat celebratory one, as in the essays by Dulali Nag or Shohini Ghosh, and in one of the articles by Lalita Gopalan. Our concern to keep in mind "all" women may have something to do with the focus on the "popular". If this is so, then it is likely to give rise to the same problem as certain earlier political initiatives, in that no differentiation is made between various female subject-positions, with regard for example to caste—class, religion or region. The answer lies not in formal textual analysis as Gopalan would have it but in producing different theories and studies of spectatorship (eg. critical ethnography). We need to be asking with greater sensitivity: Who is watching what? How do people watch? How do we create a differentiated female subject who is a social subject and not merely a textual one? Also, we need to investigate the production of the popular itself, not deploy the term as it exists. We could examine the industry, the apparatus which constructs the popular as the popular, and the deployments (both thematic and imagistic) of the popular.

### **Female Agency**

In all the essays discussed here, this is represented either in the register of Rage or that of Pleasure / Desire (especially sexual desire). Why are no other forms of agency perceived or analysed? Understandably, perhaps because both rage and pleasure / desire are seen as forbidden, feminists may have a stake in legitimising them. However, we have to contend with the problem of collapsing agency into Rage/ Desire, referencing thereby a realm of feeling conventionally designated as the feminine. A related problem has to do with the deployment of the repressive hypothesis in understanding the agency of women. In Dulali Nag's essay, for example, there are references to the "repressed emotional energies" of the heroine, to her "transgressive libidinal energy". The model is one of a hidden or repressed subjectivity, with the unconscious operating as a "site of resistance" (p. 781). The notion of personhood endorsed by this model is one where the authentic being of the woman struggles to find liberation, to achieve the "expression" of her "true" self. Such a notion, which has come under severe criticism by some feminists, for its ahistoricism and essentialism is unproblematically employed in the articles by Nag and Uberoi.

### **The State**

A concept of the state as an all-powerful, transcendent presence, manifested in censorship rules, underpins Lalita Gopalan's essays on women and cinema. We need a more historically nuanced conception of the state, as well as of the interaction of the women's movement and the state, especially since the movement doesn't always see the state as an adversary in India. Also, the state in the early years of Independence is not the state of the 70s or the 90s; a realisation of these differences is bound to have an impact on how we theorise the scope of the state's influence. In addition, we need a more historically nuanced notion of censorship: feminists ought to re-examine censorship cases, with a view to understanding the significance of reinterpretation of the law, and glimpsing the many contestations over what can be censored. The Cinematograph Act of 1952 regulating cinematic representation was based on an earlier Act of 1918. Many cinema-related cases are tried under the Sale of Obscene Books, Act 8 of 1925, or under the provisions against obscenity in the Indian Penal Code of 1860. Is the state which underwrites these censorship laws here a colonial state, a post-colonial state? Is the nature

of their hegemony the same? Feminists ought to investigate the changing nature of the state and the implications of these changes for the framing of gender questions.

### **Future Possibilities**

A crucial task for feminist criticism is the integration of explanation and analysis so that history doesn't become a mere backdrop. In emphasizing questions of female desire and agency, feminists may not pay adequate attention to the historical processes which shape these, tending instead to rely on feminist commonsense about the ubiquitousness of agency and desire.

In terms of cinema itself, feminist filmmakers (and female ones too) ought to be given theoretical attention. Other films in general need to be re-evaluated from feminist perspectives. Female stars (in Hindi as well as the many other "regional" cinemas) and women's genres (melodrama, devotionals, etc.) too require sustained analysis.

Another significant area of investigation is that of female audiences (not as existing outside of representation, since one does not wish to appeal to 'real women' outside the filmic text, but also women as historically constituted subjects interpellated by certain kinds of cinema). We should be moving towards a retheorising of female spectatorship itself (of subject positions, mechanisms of identification). In this endeavour we can build on the critical energies of existing feminist scholarship as well as the questions which continue to be raised by the women's movement in relation to popular culture.

### **Notes:**

1. Sumanta Banerjee. "Marginalization of Women's Popular Culture in Nineteenth Century Bengal", in Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (eds.), *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History* (Delhi: Kali for Women, 1989), p. 131. See also Banerjee's *The Parlour and the Streets: Elite and Popular Culture in Nineteenth Century Calcutta* (Calcutta: Seagull, 1989).

2. *Manushi* # 1 (January 1979), p. 3. I will not mention release dates of films because *Manushi* carried reviews only of current films.
3. Shobha Sadagopan, in *Manushi* # 1 (January 1979).
4. The subtitles for the individual film reviews are as follows: "The Rapist as Hero" (*Red Rose*), "Husband as God" (*Yeh Kaisa Insaaf*), "Manipulators as Heroes" (*Swayamvar*), and "Women as Villains" (*Sau Din Saas Ke*).
5. *Manushi* Vol. 3, # 3 (1983), pp. 42-44.
6. *Manushi* # 39 (1987), pp. 44-48.
7. *Manushi* # 49 (1988), pp. 43-44.
8. *Manushi* # 54-55 (1989), p. 70.
9. Susie Tharu, "Third World Women's Cinema: Notes on Narrative, Reflections on Opacity", *Economic and Political Weekly* 21, 20 (1986), pp. 864-66.
10. "Love in the Time of Nationalism, Bengali Popular Films from 1950s", *Economic and Political Weekly* (April 4, 1998), pp. 779-87.
11. Patricia Uberoi, "Dharma and Desire, Freedom and Destiny: Rescripting the Man-woman Relationship in Popular Hindi Cinema", in Meenakshi Thapan (ed.), *Embodiment: Essays on Gender and Identity* (Delhi: OUP, 1997), pp. 145-71.
12. Also mentions that in the representation of eroticism "local and contextual" (vs. universal?) factors may have a role-"notably the notorious censorship policies of the Indian government" and the self-censorship of film directors (p. 148).

13. Gopalan, "Coitus Interruptus and Love Story in Indian Cinema", in Vidya Dehejia (ed.), *Representing the Body: Gender Issues in Indian Art* (Delhi: Kali for Women, 1997), pp. 124-39.

14. Gopalan, "Avenging Women in Indian Cinema", *Screen*, 38: 1 (Spring 1997), 42-59.

15. Ghosh, "Deviant Pleasures and Disorderly Women, The Representation of the Female Outlaw in *Bandit Queen* and *Anjaam*", in Ratna Kapur (ed.), *Feminist Terrains in Legal Domains* (Delhi: Kali for Women, 1996). pp. 150-83.

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Gabriel, Karen, "Manning the Border, Gender and War in Border", *Economic and Political Weekly* (April 11, 1998), 828-32.

J. Geetha, "Disciplining the Feminine", *Deep Focus*, IV: 1 (1992), 56-58.

--"The Mutating Mother, from Mother India to Ram Lakhan", *Deep Focus*, III : 3 (1990), 9-15.

Gopalan, Lalita, "Avenging Women in Indian Cinema", *Screen*, 38: 1 (Spring 1997), 42-59.

—"Coitus Interruptus and Love Story in Indian Cinema", in Vidya Dehejia (ed.), *Representing the Body: Gender Issues in Indian Art* (Delhi: Kali for women, 1997).

Ghosh, Shohini, "Deviant Pleasures and Disorderly Women, The Representation of the Female Outlaw in *Bandit Queen* and *Anjaam*", in Ratna Kapur (ed.), *Feminist Terrains in Legal Domains* (Delhi: Kali for Women, 1996).

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