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Voice, Gender and Space in Time of Five-Year Plans

The Idea of Lata Mangeshkar

This article explores Lata Mangeshkar's artistry in order to investigate the processes through which her voice and singing style became the ideal of Indian performative femininity. The discussion examines the stabilisation of gender identities through a number of elements of Indian modernity including nationalism, Hindu identity, the 'woman question', representations of space and also, the cultural meanings of the five-year plans.

SANJAY SRIVASTAVA

This paper seeks to make some comments on how, over previous four decades or so, a particular female singing voice – with its specific tonality and modulation – became an expression of gender identity in India. And, given the interactional nature of gender, this discussion is also about the cultural politics of Indian masculinity. The intent is to explore the stabilisation of gender identities through specific elements of Indian modernity: a nationalist discourse in which 'woman' as a sign has fluctuated between the poles of the mother and the sexually dangerous being, cinematic representations of Indian culture, the relationship between the performer and the audience in Indian music, the cultural production of space, the relationship between the Indian provincial and metropolitan cultures, the discourse of centralised economic planning, and the relationship between orality and literacy in popular culture.[1] These topics are explored through the career of India's most famous 'playback' singer, Lata Mangeshkar.

Lata, Femininity and Space of the Nation

This discussion is not concerned with whether Lata's voice is 'good', 'bad', 'authentically' Indian or otherwise, but rather, with the tendencies that come to gather about her singing style and attribute to it the characteristic of 'good' and 'authentically' Indian-feminine. As well, what follows is not an argument about causality.[2] And, though the discourse of nationalism looms large in what follows, this should not be taken to mean that projects of modernity can simply be reduced to it. Clearly, nationalist ideology is only one of the grids upon which post-colonial modernity is situated.[3] So, while I primarily concentrate on pleasure as a nationalist project, it clearly does not exhaust inquiry into the topic.

During the last and the current century, Indian popular music has, in the main, been connected with films and whilst in the early films many of the songs were sung by the actors themselves, during the 1940s this practice gave way to 'playback' singing where the actors' singing voice was provided by someone else. So, as is well known, in India, singers are not necessarily stars in themselves and, till quite recently, commercial music was sold in the market under the banner of the film with which the songs were associated. Singers cultivated little public presence and rather than the personality of the singer, it was their voice that functioned as a sign. This situation has only recently begun to change and even then can't be compared to the situation of western pop music.

Lata Mangeshkar was born in 1929 in Indore, and as a child both she and her sister Asha Bhonsle learnt music from a series of accomplished musicians. Lata recorded her first song in 1942 and since then has, reputedly, sung in 18 Indian languages. One source estimates that by 1991 she had recorded around 6,000 songs [Manuel 1993:267, 10n], while journalistic accounts speak of a substantially greater corpus. Among female playback singers, then, Lata's voice has dominated the Indian popular music scene. And, along with this dominance, she established a specific vocal style, which in conjunction with the factors I will discuss below, became recognised as an aesthetic marker of 'modern' Indian female identity. And, if "vocal style (aside from the language) is the single most important marker of aesthetic identity" [Manuel 1993:52], then it can be argued that Lata's singing voice has instituted a very specific identity for Indian womanhood, one which has almost no precedence in traditional forms of Indian music. In other words, the 'woman' conjured by Lata Mangeshkar's singing voice is the product of certain development that are peculiar to the processes of Indian modernity.

One music critic has noted that Lata's style has become "the ultimate measure of sweetness in a woman's voice. [And that] Its chief characteristic was the skilled use of a particular kind of falsetto which did not exist in quite the same way before her coming" (Raghava Menon quoted in Manuel 1993: 53). Another suggests that singers from musical genres with their own distinct style began to mimic Lata's voice and that it soon "became difficult to imagine a female voice that is not Lata Mangeshkar's" (Chandavarkar quoted in Manuel 1993: 53). There is, it could be said, almost no precedence for Lata's voice – and the kind

of femininity it conjures – in the wider sphere of female singing styles in India, one marked by an extraordinary diversity of expressive traditions. Given this diversity (as I show below), it is important to think about how Lata Mangeshkar's shrill adolescent-girl falsetto came to be established as the 'ideal' in 'Indian popular music and film culture in general' [Manuel 1993:53].

My illustrations of expressive heteroglossia cannot, of course, do justice to that vast storehouse of emotions, cautionary and moral tales, laments, incantations to sensual divinities, and the constant play of historic inventiveness which is grouped under the rubric of Indian music; and hence, the random sample presented here should only be regarded as a niche in the complex ichnography of Indian music. The melange of female singing styles found in the subcontinent ranges from group singing at family ritual occasions (a wedding being the most common), to organised public performances. In some instances, many earlier ritual-linked performances have become part of the commercial performance milieu.

However, no matter what the context, women's singing styles in India – at least those not connected with the film industry – have been marked by a striking heterogeneity of tonal and other styles. So, if the *Dholi Gayikayen* of Jodhpur[4] sing of a wife demanding jewellery from her husband in 'heavy' and nasal tones, then the Hindustani classical music singer Gangubai Hangal's delivery ranges between the low alto and the upper tenor ranges and frequently confuses unacquainted listeners as to the gender of the artiste. And, though the artiste's gender is not really difficult to determine in the case of an early (1911) recording by the Hindustani classical music virtuoso Zohra Bai,[5] her voice is nevertheless imbued with a quality best described as playful aggressiveness.[6] The ghazal singing of Pakistan's Farida Khanum[7] provides another example of the heterogeneity of which I speak. Khanum's voice, alternately sensuous, pleading, and cajoling, manages to reproducethe complexities of a subject position that is a combination of "a desperate lover intoxicated with passion, a rapt visionary absorbed in mystic illumination, (and) an iconoclastic drunkard celebrating the omnipotence of wine" [Rahman, Faruqi and Pritchett 1994:94]. These examples could be multiplied manifold, with many regional and other styles vying for a place.

One perspective which seeks to account for the dominance and the subsequent stylistic homogeneity ushered in by Lata style speaks of the "creation of film music as a common-denominator mass-music style, produced in corporate, urban studios and superimposed on a heterogeneous audience; this audience has no active role in the creation of this music, and can exercise only indirect influence by choosing among the songs and styles proffered by the industry" [Manuel 1993:53].[8] This is, no doubt, an important aspect to consider. However, this standpoint can be usefully supplemented through an analysis of the wider cultural and historical dynamic which contributes towards constituting the field of the aesthetic, and in turn, influences the representation of identities, including gender identities. Consideration of aspects of the discourse of early Indian nationalism provides a good starting point towards this objective.

As feminist scholarship has pointed out 'woman' functioned as an important sign in the masculinist constructions of the idea of the nation-to-be which comes to be represented through the notion of the "mother-who-is-the-nation" [Zutshi 1993:94]. In some versions this was achieved through representing India as a Hindu goddess. However, this formulation engendered a specific problem, as far as the nationalists were concerned, in that "the image Woman (could) be perceived to contain a charge of sexuality which always threatens to run free" [Zutshi 1993:102]. How, then, to deal with this dilemma? In part, it has been suggested, the resolution of the 'woman question' was achieved through identifying women not just as the carriers of 'tradition' but tradition itself: women's bodies became the site on which tradition was seen to be [Chatterjee 1993a; Mani 1993]. I have suggested elsewhere [Srivastava 1998:chap 4] that, persuasive as it may seem, this formulation of the issue should be treated with some of caution as it may capture only one of several scenarios; that, the public life of the Indian family – and 'its' women – also had a role to play in debates about engagements with modernity. The following discussion seeks to explore this very public dimension of the 'woman question' in the career of Indian modernity through the pervasive influence of a singer who has, as if, crafted an entire structure of emotions in the post-colonial era.

With the coming of cinema in India, the tableau of public forms became inextricably attached to the possibilities of cinematic representation and men and women become public figures, attached to the natural and human topographies. This, it might be suggested, was a result of the particular interpretation of the term 'culture' that had come to be established during the modern period. This was an interpretation filmic techniques had almost a natural affinity to. I am referring to the understanding of culture which represented it as linked to geographical places [Clifford 1988; Gupta and Ferguson 1992], and to landscape [Gibson 1993], such that Indian culture becomes attached to specific natural and human-made sites: the Himalayas, hill-stations, the Ganges, the Taj Mahal, ruins of past 'civilisations', religious sites, and office buildings which constituted the representational iconography of the fledgling nation state.

The relationship between geography and the nation may have received scant attention from scholars of India, however, its importance was explicitly recognised by nationalists of various hue. One of the pithiest example is to be encountered in the work of Sister Nivedita (Margaret Noble) and occurs in an article on the 'Future Education of Indian Woman'. A fundamental aspect of women's education in India, Sister Nivedita was to say, must lie in making women more 'efficient' [Sister Nivedita 1923:59]. This called for, among other things, the making of 'queen and housewife, saint and citizen' (1923:57). Such an 'efficiency drive' towards a new society, the Sister noted, required that women be imparted a geographical sensibility. For, geographical knowledge constituted the fundamental building block of the consciousness of national feeling [Sister Nivedita 1923:59]. This might be achieved through resources already at 'our' disposal: "the wandering Bhagabatas or Kathakas, with the magic lantern, may popularise geography, by showing slides illustrative of various pilgrimages" (1923:61):

> Picture, pictures, pictures, these are the first of instruments in trying to concretise ideas, pictures and the mother-tongue. If we would impart a love of country, we must give a country to love. How shall women be enthusiastic about something they cannot imagine?

It can be argued that the above derives from a 'modern' view of culture as a territorialised and fixed concept,[9] rather than as the relationship between human beings. One can contrast this with the absence of the realist convention in representing landscape in, say, certain schools of Indian art such as the Madhubani style [Thakur 1982] and Mughal miniatures [Beach 1992] where landscape represents human emotional states or religious beliefs

rather than standing for culture itself. A similar point has been made with respect to the absence of a realist tradition in medieval Hindi poetry that provides a contrast with developments in the modern period. Karine Schomer points out that "nature had not been absent from (medieval) Braj poetry, but it was an idealised nature, usually relegated to the role of enhancing human emotions. ...The treatment of nature in the (modern) Dwivedi period was quite different. Not only was it made an independent poetic subject, but it was described in realistic, concrete detail" [Schomer 1983:11]. It is precisely this modern – 'realistic' – sensibility of landscape and territory that found play in early cinema.

However, even during the modern period, a sensibility of culture as a relationship between humans rather than with fixed space could also be found. A Marathi book published towards the end of last century provides a tantalising glimpse into this alternative world view. The book – *Manjha Prawas*, published in Hindi as *Ankhon Dekha Gadar* – is an account of the travels of the Brahmin Vishnubhatt Godse from Pune to Mathura sometime in 1857. For the modern reader, Godse's travelogue has a strangely disorienting effect. For, the familiar – and comforting – descriptions of scenery and landscape are almost entirely absent in an account that is, instead, teeming with people, procedures, and transactions. We can only begin to comprehend this transactional sensibility if we think of it as part of a very different understanding of culture to that which we have become accustomed. It is, in fact, a different way of organising culture.

Now, when Indian culture becomes attached to landscape and territory, the heroes and heroines of Indian films come to meet, and sing and dance in these places which come to constitute Indian cultural and national spaces. And herein lay one of the problems for the 'woman question' in India, and where Lata Mangeshkar has been particularly helpful. For, many of these spaces of Indian culture were public spaces, i e, defined as 'not-home'. An important aspect of the definition of 'culture' once it becomes attached to territories and landscapes is, indeed, its public nature, an aspect that is crucial for illustrating what 'Indian' culture is. And yet, how was the 'fraternal contract' [Pateman 1980] which was nationalism to deal with this increasing visibility of the filmic woman 'out of place', i e, in public spaces? And, most importantly, what was at issue was not just visibility but also – given the 'musical' nature of Indian cinema – the audibility of women in public spaces. Here was a great dilemma. Indian films both contributed towards the consolidation of a national imagination on a mass scale – these sites are India, they said – but also seemed to pose a threat to one of the fundamental organising principles of the discourses on nationalism, viz, the positioning of women within it.

It would appear that the Lata's stylistic innovation offered a viable solution to the above problem of representation in the public sphere: at the same time that women's bodies became visible in public spaces via films, their presence was 'thinned' through the expressive timbre granted them. The heroines for whom Lata provided the singing voice may well have been prancing around hill-sides and streets while performing a song-sequence, but this gesture which otherwise threatened male dominance of these spaces, was domesticated through the timbre, tonality and stylistic stricture that marked that presence. The potentially powerful image of the heroine enjoying the freedom of the public space in equal measure to the male hero and singing in a voice that may express an ambiguous femininity was, through Lata's voice, undermined.

However, it is not enough to say that Lata provides the bridge between colonial-nationalist history and modern cinematic problematic of representations. Her 'art' is almost fundamental to another process of modernity: the recasting of the relationship between the performer and the audience. Writing at the turn of the century, Ananda Coomaraswamy, that interesting – and problematic – scholar of Indian (or, rather, Hindu) aesthetics made what is a particularly profound observation in this regard. He suggested that in Indian music the relationship between the performer and the audience is one where the audience also brings an artistry to listening: "the listener (responds) with an art of his own" [Coomaraswamy 1974:103]. And further, that "the musician in India finds a model audience – technically critical, but somewhat indifferent to voice production" (1974:103). The artistry of the performer, in other words is not (or was not) hegemonic, since it faced the skill of the audience in receiving the performance. It is not therefore "the voice that makes the singer, as so often happens in Europe", Coomaraswamy (1974:104) was to note.

Lata Mangeshkar manages to break this dynamic relationship between the performer and the audience[10] and impose a code of interpretation through the dramatic emphasis on the singing rather than the song, through the "sensuous perfection of the voice" [Coomaraswamy 1974:103], where now the feminine can only be articulated through a constricted timbre and style. The audience is now instructed on what femininity is.

One of the ways in which this dominance may have been achieved might be illustrated through reference to the relationship between orality and literariness.[11] It would appear that the wider context in which the audience exists as an active entity with *its* own artistry is the context where 'orality' continues to be a valued mode of interaction; the performative contexts of orality can be thought of as the situation where the listener may talk back, interrupt, and re-interpret. The dynamics of the oral context are one where the artistry of the performer is not reduced to any singular characteristic, and certainly not the voice. This view finds strong support in contemporary scholarship through the absence of any discussion that seeks to define a norm for voice quality in Indian performative traditions. Susan Wadley's discussion of the 'performance strategies' of the artistes of the north Indian epic of *Dhola* is a case in point. Wadley suggests that the great popularity of the most highly regarded of these, Swarup Singh, is due to "his magnificently expressive voice – *covering a range of performance styles*" [Wadley 1989:81; emphasis added]. There is no suggestion here that any one particular type of tonality is considered to be the mark of 'good' singing. Effective performances of *Dhola*, Wadley suggests, depend on two things: "telling the story in a clear fashion and providing variety" (97; see also Hansen 1992 on north Indian nautanki theatre). Since 'traditional' Indian music was not written music, it belonged to this milieu.[12]

Lata's music, on the other hand, derives from a 'compositional' context: for "the elaborate arrangements (of Indian film music) reflect a precomposed and notated (i e, written) approach to music composition and performance" [Manuel 1993:50]. The compositional or literary mode of performance can be linked to a wider sensibility about the relationship between performers and audiences, and between readers and texts: it is a sensibility which has the potential to privilege the 'expert' and disenfranchises the 'lay-person'. It is in this sense, then, that Lata's voice becomes the unquestionable authority on the feminine ideal

and, inasmuch as that ideal becomes entrenched, the artistry of the audience in receiving the performance is of a far more limited kind. So, here, the consolidation of 'literariness' as an aspect of Indian modernity served to codify representations of femininity.

Lata's adolescent-girl voice for the adult woman comes, then, to establish the authority of the written word over the recalcitrant possibilities of orality, overriding the "substantial amount of melodic, rhythmic, and textually expressive play" [Hansen 1992:243] that marks the latter's expressive universe. Further, through the historical association of writing with men, this also legitimised the authority of male notions of the sign 'woman'. The other aspect to this is that it simultaneously established the dominance of bourgeois notions of gender, communication and being in the world, marginalising other existing worldviews. In this sense as well, it was expressive of certain contexts of Indian nationalist discourse. So, Lata's voice is the simultaneous site of both gender and class.

It is interesting to note that when Lata did give public performances it was, as Manuel (1993) points out, just as likely that she would stand rigidly on stage, and sing with her head buried in a notebook. Here, at least two contexts are at play. Firstly, what matters is the voice and the way it has been defined by the 'notebook', by the authority of the writing. And secondly, Lata's own public persona (on record, cassette and CD cover sleeves, and in magazines) is of the respectable house-wife, perhaps even a mother, though a mother of the nation who has given that nation a voice; "For the very heart of India throbs in your voice", as the lyricist Naushad Ali was to write in a ghazal in praise of Lata [quoted in Bhimani 1995:16]. Lata's motherhood falls, in this context, within the realms of the 'virgin mother'. It is important to note that Lata has almost never been dogged by relationship linked gossip that surrounds many other women in the entertainment industry. In addition to the virgin mother thematic, there is (to resort to culturally mixed metaphors) also an aura of the cult of Meera – the medieval princess-poetess and an iconic figure in the bhakti movement – about her. Like the bhakta poets, Lata too has forsaken her sexuality and domesticity for devotion to a greater cause, namely, the endowment of national-pleasure through a redefinition of modern Indian feminine identity. And, in the process, she has become iconcised as virgin mother (sister?) of the nation (for more on bhakta poets, see *Manushi* 50-2, January-June 1989).

So, here, Lata, the mother who has breathed life into the 'national' woman (the most famous of them all, Radha, from Mehboob Khan's 1957 epic *Mother India*, comes immediately to mind) articulates a gendered intertextual space where the seemingly disreputable public role of the woman as entertainer is contained by the representational strategies of motherliness and sisterliness. The most obvious contrast is with the ghazal singer Begum Akhtar who both drank and smoked and made no effort, even in old age, to project the image of either an asexual mother figure or a generically 'respectable' grandmother.

Reclaiming the Past, Cleansing the Present

The processes through which Lata's voice became established as aesthetic epitome of Indian feminine identity can also be seen as part of the cultural politics of the making of the 'modern' Indian woman within the matrices of upper-caste, Hindu milieus. In other words, Lata's singing voice was part of the broader processes of nationalist thought where the figure of the woman-citizen, inasmuch as she was the object of debate and discussion, emerged out of the skein of colonial and post-colonised caste and communal politics.

In a discussion of radio broadcasting in India, David Lelyveld has suggested that the Hindu-Muslim context is an important one for understanding the formulation of 'national programming' [Lelyveld 1995:55] and the attempts to inculcate a 'national' culture through All-India Radio (AIR). And though Lelyveld's attention is mainly directed towards exploring the strategies and manoeuvres through which Indian classical music was sought to be Hinduised in the immediate post-independence period, I think there is an important link between his discussion and the case of Indian film music.

In what follows, I do not mean to imply that there existed at all levels of Indian society a fundamental hostility between Hindus and Muslims. There is sufficient historical, anthropological and literary material to indicate otherwise. Rather, that specific historical circumstances coalesced during the second half of the 19th century to produce a milieu within which an anti-Muslim rhetoric was prevalent in many aspects of Indian life.

In the post-independence period, the Hindu-Muslim angle in the context of producing a 'national' music culture came to the fore in several ways. And, in as much as the post-colonised nation state's cultural capital [Bourdieu 1986] – its 'ancient heritage', its various architectural landmarks, its philosophical and cultural achievements, etc – received as much attention as the debates around creating more economic capital, the task of producing a 'national' musical culture was taken up in a particularly prominent manner. Some of these debates were intrinsically linked to the supposed fate of Indian music during colonial rule. So, B V Keskar, minister of information and broadcasting from 1950 to 1962 was to suggest that "only with national independence, and indeed, primarily through radio broadcasting... could the musical heritage of India be saved" [Lelyveld 1995:55]. However, Keskar did not believe that the blame for the lamentable state of Indian music could be traced exclusively to Occidental disdain for Oriental cultural forms and to 'imperial neglect' of native traditions; he was of the unequivocal opinion that that the deleterious effects to which it had been subject also derived from the actions of north Indian Muslims. This community, he suggested, "had appropriated and distorted the ancient art, turning it into the secret craft of exclusive lineages, the gharanas, and ignorant of Sanskrit, divorced it from the religious context of Hindu civilisation" [Lelyveld 1995:55].

The wider context of Keskar's remarks is, by now, a familiar one: that the post-colonised nation state must reinvigorate the ancient Sanskritic culture which had been neglected by the British and, more fundamentally, corrupted by the Muslims. So, in another context, the 'reformist' Arya Samaj sought, through the Gurukul education movement, to re-vivify a 'fallen' society through the task of forming "a sound, active and decisive character in... students" [Pandit 1974:211]. Hence within the Gurukul schools – of 'ancient' and 'Vedic' origin – "the students were called Brhmacharis on the pattern of the Ancient Gurukulas" [Pandit 1974:156].

Keskar's thinking on Indian music was, then, heir to the history of what might be termed 'Hindu contextualism' [Srivastava 1998] of the late 19th and early 20th century nationalist discourse in India. And, as is well known, Keskar was not alone in his elaboration of this theme. Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande (1860-1936)

was another extremely influential figure in the movement that sought to construct a 'national' music culture through returning Indian music to its putative ancient Hindu roots [Lelyveld 1995]. These ideas formed an important sub-text in debates regarding the development of a 'civil' post-colonised identity, and constituted the backdrop to the attempted Hinduisation and gentrification of Indian culture. Lelyveld points out, for instance, that under Vallabhbhai Patel's reign as minister for information and broadcasting (1946), the effort towards producing a purified national culture was manifested in the prohibition of "singers and musicians from the courtesan culture" – any one (as one source put it) "whose public life was a scandal" [Lelyveld 1995:57]. As well, during Keskar's tenure as minister, there came to be instituted a bureaucratic selection procedure for All-India Radio musicians whose most explicit aim appears to have been the undermining of the *Gharana* system. An important outcome of this process of linking employment possibility within AIR with "certification from recognised music academies" [Lelyveld 1995:58] was the entry into the profession of many who were described as being from 'respectable' backgrounds; those, in other words, who had skirted the illicit influence of the Muslim dominated *Gharana* and allied systems of performance[13]. All this is to say that within early 20th-century nationalist discourse there existed a strong theme which linked the emergence of the modern Indian self to a 'pure' and 'ancient' Hindu genealogy [Sunder Rajan 1993, Chatterjee 1993b] and to a 'respectable' bourgeois milieu.

An additional way of thinking about this issue is to suggest, as Lelyveld does, that "the great enemy in this effort to construct a new music by administrative decree was the increasingly popular new style of film songs" (1995, p 59; see also Chakravarty 1993; Barnouw and Krishnaswamy 1963, pp 200-205). However, it is possible to suggest that the ideology of a 'pure' and 'respectable' national culture found voice in the realms of popular (that is film) music itself. And, that Lata Mangeshkar's singing style was the most obvious manifestation of this process. Hence, I suggest that the gradual development of Lata's singing voice into what it became at the peak of her popularity – for her very early singing style carries strong resonance of the Pakistani singer Noorjehan's nasality – was part of the process of purifying – Hinduising and gentrifying – the figure of the 'ideal' Indian woman of post-coloniality. This was to be the woman fit to carry the mantle of 'bearer of our traditions'.

From its very beginning, the make-up of the Indian film industry would have caused considerable consternation to the votaries of a national 'purification' project linked to a 'great' Hindu past. For, the grounds for such disquiet had been well prepared. The 19th century journalist and cultural critic Bhartendu Harishchandra (1850-1885) had lamented that that both Jains and Muslims had been responsible for the destruction of Indian *Sangeet Shashtra* and that when "the Muslim emperors such as Akbar and Muhammadshah did pay any attention to it, they only favoured Muslim musicians, and this led to the further decline of Hindu artistes" [Harishchandra 1995:117]. This theme is also salient in the life work of one of the great – and quite tragic – figures of 20th century Indian music. In founding the first of the publicly funded Gandharva Mahavidyalayas music academies (1901), Vishnu Digambar Paluskar (1872-1931) sought not just to introduce an emerging middle-class to musical training but also to situate such training, and hence the identity of this class, within a specific moral landscape. So, one writer has noted that "while there was strict discipline (at the Mahavidyalayas), there was stricter discipline in moral training. The usual odium attached to the clan of musicians was thus removed and they began to be treated with respect" [Deva 1992:106]. Given the predominance of the *Gharana* tradition, the point that 'the clan of musicians' acts as metonym for 'Muslim performers' need hardly be belaboured.

In the opening decades of the 20th century, then, many, no doubt, were able to read Bhartendu's comments and Paluskar's efforts as a 'correct' evaluation of the Muslim influence upon (Hindu) Indian society. And, further, they may have surmised, this could now be witnessed in another sphere of Indian life, viz, in the newly established cinema industry. For, it is possible to speak of a Muslim "cultural influence that has determined the very nature of (Indian) cinema" [Kesavan 1994: 245]. From its personnel, to the film-titles, to the language of the screenplays and lyrics, Hindi cinema had been deeply shaped by Muslim influences.[14] The most obvious manifestation of this was, of course, the predominance of the Urdu language in various aspects of Hindi cinema.

Saadat Hasan Manto has provided one of the most vivid accounts of the Muslim social context in the Indian film industry. Manto's pithy essays (1962-1984) on his days as an industry worker in pre-partition India offers us valuable social and cultural insights into an era, and an enterprise, marked by rapidly shifting contexts of transformation. One of these contexts – whose portrayal by Manto is marked both by warmth and playful wickedness – concerns the 'courtesan' background of many of the pioneers of Indian cinema. In an era when film-work of any kind was treated as disreputable and association with film-workers as equally suspect, it was natural that the industry's mainstay would be those already stigmatised by mainstream society (or, at least those who came to be increasingly stigmatised within the new moral dispensation of the national movement). Manto's essay on the actress Nargis is illustrative of this. Nargis (1929-81), he points out, was the daughter of the Muslim singer, actress and filmmaker Jaddanbai and her Hindu lover, Mohan babu. However, more importantly, there was about Jaddanbai that aura of courtesan 'disreputability' that inspired men such as Keskar and Patel to, at least implicitly, call for a purification of the national public culture. Manto describes this aspect of Jaddanbai's life in the context of her great devotion to Mohan babu:

> Mohanbabu was a *raiis*, and, infatuated by the sheer magic of Jaddanbai's singing and her voice, he completely lost his heart to her. He was a handsome, educated and healthy man. But none of these attributes proved of any use to Jaddanbai [who was the main provider for the family]. Jaddanbai herself was a very prominent person of her time and there was no dearth of *khandani Nawabs* and *Rajas* willing to shower her with gold and silver at her *mujras*. However, when these showers stopped, and the skies cleared, Jaddanbai always turned to her Mohan, her true love.
>
> [Manto 1984:14][15]

Such was the opprobrium attached to association with the "morally corrupt" members of the film industry – and in particular with women of Muslim background within it, since they had doubly violated the tenets of 'proper' gender *and* occupational behaviour – that even 'respectable' Muslims fought shy of it or, at least, attempted to keep it a secret. Manto explains that his wife and her two sisters had formed a close friendship with Nargis and would often visit her at the latter's house in Bombay. But,

> For many days my wife kept these visits a complete secret. When she did tell me, I pretended to be annoyed, and mistaking my

pretence for real anger she quickly asked for forgiveness. "Look, we made a mistake", she said, "but for god's sake don't ever mention this to anyone!"

[Manto 1984:17]

Jaddanbai and her milieu of 'outcast entertainers' [Chakravarty 1993:37], to use D G Phalke's self-pitying phrase, was not an exceptional aspect of the early period of Indian cinema and it is not difficult to see how it might have provided ready-made material for a nationalist discourse organised around the theme of the 'corruption' introduced into Indian social and cultural life by Muslims. The 'low prestige of the cinema' [Chakravarty 1993:39] as a professional calling has been commented on by film-scholars, and my discussion here attempts to place this in the context of turn-of-the-century nationalist discourses on gender and religious identity in 'modern' India.

In another essay on the actress Nasim Bano, Manto recalls the making of the 1942 film Ujala. Due to a weak story line, ordinary music, and poor direction, the film flopped and the owner of the production company – 'Ahsan sahib' – had to suffer great financial loss. However,

during the process (of completing the film) he fell in love with (the heroine) Nasim Bano. Nasim, however, was no stranger to Ahsan sahib. For, his father, Khanbahadur Muhammad Sulaiman, Chief Engineer, had been an acquaintance of Naseem's mother, Chamia. In fact, for all intents and purposes, she was his second wife. So, Ahsan sahib must have had ample opportunity of meeting Nasim on various occasions.

(1984, pp 19-20)

It is this context, where 'Muslimness' and 'debauchery' became conjoined through an emerging discourse of middle-class Hindu respectability, which became the object of the project of post-colonial purification; and Lata's voice was one of the several sites upon which this project unfolded, though the purge, it could be suggested, was only partially successful. It is no doubt true that the classical music milieu was an explicit target for the 'reform' project discussed above, however, the mass appeal of the film industry and its by-products, also made it a target of the reformers zeal. For, the 'good' name of the nation is most often at risk from the retrograde tendencies of its masses, and it is the always the responsibility of enlightened citizenry to shepherd the former towards the portals of citizenship and civilised action.

Through Lata's artistry, the 'disreputableness' of ambiguous tonalities and the threat of uncertain femininity – the mise en scène of Krishna Sobti's great novel *Mitro Marjani* ([1958] 1991), for example – was brought into alignment with the discourses of the 'pure' and controllable Hindu womanhood. The most obvious counterpoint to Lata's style was what could be referred to as the *Kotha* (brothel/courtesan) style of singing, echoes of which can be discerned in, say, singer Shamshad Begum's voice. It is difficult to convey the qualities of a voice – the social and emotional contexts it may conjure for the listener – in a discussion such as this. However, it is possible to say that, through certain historical processes of which the nationalist discourse was perhaps the most important, public singing by women, unless connected to religious and ritual purposes (such as weddings), came to carry the taint of disrepute; it became the preserve of the tawaif (the courtesan), the lower caste woman, or the 'tribal' woman.[16] And, the tonalities of such public singing – which itself remained unfettered by the definitional constraints of a 'good' voice – became associated with 'disreputable' – undomesticated – conduct.

At a later point, when the 'Muslim problem', and the search for a 'proper' – controllable – femininity (and hence a 'proper' masculinity) became part of the nationalist project of cultural redemption, certain kinds of voices came to be marked as an unacceptable aspect of 'proper' post-coloniality. There now emerged an inventory of 'impurities' with respect to 'proper' post-colonial femininity: included in this inventory, it is possible to say, was nasality and a 'heavy' (i e, masculine) voice. And, whilst it is true that quite a number of feminine identities came to be seen as not possessing a 'proper' voice, most commonly, however, it is the Muslim tawaif who became inextricably connected to that kind of voice. For it was she who, in the redemptive projects of turn-of-the-century nationalism posed the greatest threat to middle-class Hindu masculinity: for, she was dexterous not merely in matters of physical allure, but could also, at least as far as popular mythology would have it, match wits with her male clientele.[17]

So, it is at this juncture – where a variety of modern processes of culture came together – that Lata's skill as a forever-adolescent voice, singing out, but through the controllable timbre of a child-woman, is situated. She provided another resolution of the 'woman question' in the post-colonial context: how to have women in public, but also within the firm grip of a watchful, adult, masculinity, such that the public woman became forever infantilised.

The process of 'purifying' Indian public culture took the form, then, of purging it of its Muslim associations and its connections of various realms of (non-middle class) disreputability.[18] Lata Mangeshkar's voice, it can be argued, became the site for the unfolding of this project: a place at the cross-roads of a public culture where the adolescent girl's voice-persona appeared to provide the opportunity of both expressing an appropriately modern femininity, and a suitably Hinduised nationality. This point is nicely encapsulated in some stray comments in Harish Bhimani's hagiographic *In Search of Lata Mangeshkar* (1995). Lata sometimes cancelled her recording schedules, Bhimani says, if she felt that her voice was "not at its best" (1995:21). And, that it may have been a lapse in her judgment (as Bhimani portrays it) that led her to record the song "'*Paaon chhoo lene do...*' for Roshan's [sic] in *Tajmahal*. [For,] It has a perceptible nasal twang to it" (1995, p 21). A few pages later, speaking of a pre-recorded introduction by Lata to "an orchestral version of ten of her favourite tunes", Bhimani notes that "Her voice was clear and soft. Like that of a girl on the threshold of adolescence" (1995, p 34). It is this heterosexual male fantasy of a Hindu adolescent girl – both controllable ever-ready to please – that is an overwhelming aspect of the desire that congregates around Lata's voice[19]. And, in keeping with the unbridled possibilities of fantasies, the voice that conjures the pliable adolescent girl also concurrently facilitates the invocatory gesture that imagines the 'mother'.[20]

I do not, however, mean to present Lata herself as a passive figure, merely singing to the tunes ministered by her professional mentors. For, there is no reason to assume that she herself has not been an active participant in the project of 'fine-tuning' her voice to the point of its classic recognisability. Finally, in this context, the project of purification tended, as mentioned above, to remain incomplete: so whilst the 'ideal' feminine voice of Indian popular culture did, in fact, became derivative of Lata's style, the Muslimness of Indian filmic culture also remained an inescapable fact. Throughout the post-independence period, film titles and song lyrics continued to borrow heavily from Persian and Urdu and many of the most prominent lyricists and actors

were also Muslim. In fact, in several films Lata was also the playback singer for Muslim on-screen characters, with the result that when she lent her voice to an on-screen tawaif , the tawaif sang with all the 'sweetness' of a girl-child![21] In these ways the project of Hinduising Indian public culture remained unfinished and may be best viewed as a contest over the cultural terrain.[22]

The Five-Year Plan Hero

It is the context of 20th century development theory, as expressed through the formulation of the Indian planning regime that provides the next rung of my argument. For, for a fuller understanding of the sign of the filmic woman who embodies Lata's voice, we have to turn to the filmic man whose identity, I suggest, is strongly linked to the nationalist economic development philosophy reified in the formulation and implementation of the five-year plans. I want, then, to link the discussion thus far to the male hero of the post-independence film era, and will refer to him as the five-year plan (FYP) hero.[23] The iconic presence of the FYP hero gained some its legitimacy through both the Keynesian and the neoclassical models of economic thought, and he stood both for government intervention and for delayed gratification through the reinvestment of savings for the 'national' good. The FYP hero represents, in a broad sense, a particular formulation of Indian masculinity where manliness comes to attach not to bodily representations or aggressive behaviour but, rather, to being 'scientific' and 'rational' [Srivastava 1996].

In the Indian case, economic development policies, specially in the guise of the Soviet inspired five-year plans, traced a particular lineage to the world of science, not least through figures such as the physicist and statistician P C Mahalanobis (1893-1972), an active Brahmo Samaji, keen researcher of anthropometry, founder of the Indian Statistical Institute, and a leading influence upon the formulation of the Second Five-Year Plan [Rudra 1996; see also Chatterjee 1993b, chap 10]. [24] One of the ways in which the scientific nature of the FYP hero – and Mahalanobis is perhaps the most obvious real life example of this post-colonial figure – came to be represented on the screen was through the operation of very specific spatial strategies. An important aspect of this strategy was the iconic use of roads and highways in Hindi films of the 1950s and 1960s. My gesture is to the bitumen road as a place of encounter between the hero and the heroine, as the backdrop to crucial song sequences, and as the linear space which provided the musical interlude for the display of the FYP hero's technological aptitude as he adeptly handles that epitome of modernist desire - the motor car. Indeed, roads and highways in these films seem to carry such an aura of a planned modernity – all those aspirations of 'progressing' in both literal and figurative senses – that the woman at the steering wheel and women on bicycles riding along the open highway become one of the most powerfully evocative representations of the 'modern' Indian womanhood; 'these' women come to embody a manual dexterity which marks them as visibly different.

It could also be suggested that the recurring association between the road/highway and the FYP hero really serves to emphasise another point: that of the 'natural' milieu of the FYP hero – the metropolis.[25] We get some idea of the metropolis as a structuring trope through a series of post-independence Hindi films. So, "in films such as 'Shri 420' (1955, Raj Kapur), 'New Delhi' (1956, Mohan Segal), 'Sujata' (1959, Bimal Roy) and 'Anuradha' (1960, Hrishikesh Mukherjee), the struggle over meaning and being in a post-colonial society takes place in a context where the metropolis is always a wilful presence" [Srivastava 1998:165]. Here, as in other films, the metropolis is, by turns, a site of decadence and extravagance luring 'innocent' people into its web, a progressive influence upon 'backward' intellects, and the promise of a contractual civil society which would undermine the atavism of kin and caste affiliations, ostensibly typified by the cinematic village. But perhaps, most importantly, the metropolis is also home to the modern, male, 'improver', the FYP hero.

Spatial strategies are particularly important representational tools in these films, one where, as I have noted in another discussion, "the aura of the metropolis manifests itself through a new language of cinematic space, [and] where striation and secularisation become important expressive principles" [Srivastava 1998:165]. So, the opening shots of 'New Delhi', establish the sense of the post-colonial modernity the hero hopes to find in the milieu of the city. It is a modernity that expresses itself through the measured grid of roads, traffic lights and footpaths; and, the camera, the hero, and the audience look out at these landmarks from a car being driven along major thoroughfares along which are dotted office buildings and other memorials to the nation state. In 'New Delhi'/New Delhi, economic planning and city planning come together "at a juncture where state intervention and a geometrical sensibility of modernity produce a peculiarly post-colonial nationalist aesthetics" [Srivastava 1998:166].

In some instances, the aura of the city is figured as the capacity of the male body to infiltrate those national spaces – such as the village – that may still be under the sway of 'primitive' influences. Here, the metropolitan male body – imbued with an individualism that marks the triumph of the emphasis on personality in post-colonised contexts – fairly hurtles along national highways and train tracks, en route to the cinematic village; his object of social transformation is to be achieved through the transformation of personalities, and his presence as metropolitan virtues incarnate is the chief therapy. The hero is "a projectile, clearing the way for a national space and effacing the embarrassment of backward spaces (and 'mentalities') with searing speed and unstoppable forward, always 'forward', momentum" [Srivastava 1998:166].

One way of exploring this aspect of an important filmic convention is to think of Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope, "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" [Bakhtin 1990:84]. One of these, the chronotope of the road, consists in the fusing together of time and space (hence 'forming the road'). This, Bakhtin points out, "is the source of the rich metaphorical expansion on the image of the road as a course: 'the course of life,' 'to set out on a new course,' 'the course of history' and so on" (ibid, p 244). Extending this discussion, we may argue that in Indian films roads and highways become metonymic of the path to nationhood itself: where "people who are normally kept separate by social and spatial distance can accidentally meet; any contrast may crop up, the most various fates may collide and interweave with one another" (ibid, p 243). And, that the road and the FYP hero combine to reify the notion of progress of national life, of modernity, of the male hero as the mobile (and speedy!) agent of change, and of that 'civil' space from where all roads – and ideas of change – emanate, the metropolis.

The male hero-wayfarer of Indian films has modern knowledge – scientific knowledge – as his most fundamental attitude. And this knowledge becomes the mark of post-colonised middle-class masculinity.

Indeed, the filmic hero of the above era was, typically, portrayed as an engineer (building roads or dams), a doctor, a scientist, or a bureaucrat. Now, the cinematic presence of the hero was also one which could be quite easily characterised as 'camp', for the camp persona of the heterosexual hero could coexist quite comfortably with a nationalist ideology which identified post-independence manliness as aligned to the 'new' knowledges of science and rationality which, it held, would transform the 'irrational' native into the modern citizen. We need, then, to differentiate between corporeal and epistemological masculinity [Srivastava 1998] with the latter arising out of the specific historical circumstance of post-colonised life where nationalist discourses on gender and modernity engaged with colonial representations of the 'effeminate' native [Sinha 1995]. So, the FYP hero became the post-independence masculinist ideal – 'homo scientificus' and 'homo economicus' rolled in to one.[26] It is at this point that the relationship between Indian metropolitan and provincial culture and their different histories comes into play.[27]

It is possible to argue that the scientific career – engineer, doctor, etc – as an avenue of social advancement was and continues to be more sought after by the provincial middle-classes rather than their metropolitan counterparts. This is linked to the specific conditions of Indian post-coloniality where the vast majority of the provincial bourgeoisie has lacked the avenues for the acquisition of 'cultural capital' [Bourdieu 1986]. In other words, a situation where 'technical' qualifications are the prime means of social advancement for the provincial middle-classes. So, in the metropolitan centres a 'Pass' degree in English literature or history from certain universities and colleges was often sufficient cache towards well-remunerated employment in, say, the corporate sector; for here, 'social capital' (i e, 'contacts') were also a part of the context. For middle and lower middle class men from provincial towns and cities, however, technical qualifications provided the chief means of a reasonably secure livelihood, reflecting the differential development of metropolitan and provincial systems of education and the relationship between the English language and the 'vernaculars' in post-colonial societies. So, it could be argued that the FYP hero is, in fact, a representation of the provincial bourgeois male and the representation of women vis-a-vis Lata's voice expresses the provincial male desire to keep a check on 'its' women in a time of rapid change.

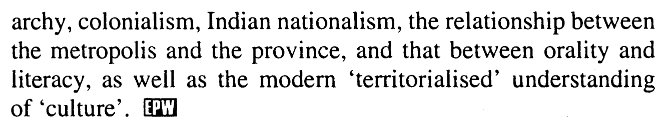
Now, to make some further connections, we might also consider reading the filmic romance of the 1950s and 1960s era as narratives for the 'future development' of the individual. If we keep in mind the asymmetry between Indian metropolitan and cultural spheres, then it is not difficult to speak of the provincial male (and female) as the subject of the movie romance and the complex role of the latter as the site of a narrative of the 'future development' denied by the economic process. To be 'in love', could then, in some but not all contexts, act as a metonym for 'freedom': the freedom to 'achieve', to individual choice, and, finally, to 'fulfilment'.[28] So here, my suggestion is that the Hindi film of the above era was really a compact between those who made the film and those watched it. The (provincial male) audience found itself fully represented on the screen, and, most of the song-writers, scriptwriters were, in fact, provincial men for whom the film industry was a means of employment which did not require any formal qualifications. And, the 'check' which was sought to be imposed on filmic women through Lata's voice was expressed in another way which brings to the fore the provincial-metropolitan angle of my discussion. The heroine singing in a public place not only sang in an adolescent-girl voice, but also mouthed lyrics which, in addition to Urdu, also drew heavily from the various dialects of Hindi. In other words, from the various provincial versions of Hindi, which, in its national incarnation, has been Sanskritised in order to give it a classical genealogy.

It could be suggested, then, that Lata's voice – her artistry – was also a part of the process where men from strong patriarchal backgrounds – the film industry people – sought to exercise control over the representation of women through both an expressive timbre and a vocabulary which resonated with more 'controllable' environment: the village and the province. The city can, potentially, be a threat to male hegemony, and the presence of the screen-woman in its public places compounded this threat. So, if the heroine figure was infantilised through Lata's voice, she was also produced as familiar and speaking – or, rather, singing – in the language of 'home' and the controllable domestic space rather than a recently produced public sphere, the nation.[29]

However, it would be naive to posit a simple relationship between a 'modern' metropolitan milieu and the lack of patriarchal strictures; writers and thinkers such as Krishna Sobti, Fanishwarnath Renu, Rajendra Yadav also tell us something about other sites of 'progressive' thinking. It may be more fruitful, then, to suggest that that if on the one hand the Lata complex emerged from the patriarchal concerns of provincial male culture, it was no less connected to the modernisation of patriarchal forms prevalent in Indian metropolitan culture.

In addition to the 'scientific' persona of the FYP hero, it is also worth noting that his 'task' was usually positioned vis-a-vis the countryside: he acted to bring enlightenment to India's villages, a theme borrowed from, among others, Orientalist and development theory orientated discourses about the 'irrational' peasants and their recalcitrance to the logic of modernity. Now, in as much as the heroine sang in her adolescent girl voice and the songs were sprinkled liberally with words from village dialects, 'woman' as sign also came to represent the village (or, province; e g, 'Anuradha', 1960); that which needed to be 'improved', to be made more 'rational' through the efforts of men who embodied the new knowledges which had the made the west 'progressive', and India backward. The metropolitan theme has an important history in Indian nationalist discourse [Srivastava 1998] and it is this which also finds play in the case of Lata and her music: men became the progressive 'metropolis' and women, the backward 'countryside'. Further the 'imbrication of sexuality, sex, gender, and nature' [Holmlund 1994:305] happens in Lata's case through the voice itself: the 'natural' identity of the woman is aligned to that of the girl-child, and hence adult femaleness is naturalised through associating the adult woman as forever closer to childhood, in as much as in popular discourse the child is seen to be closer to nature.

Hence, either way – through 'traditional' provincial masculine politics or 'modern' metropolitan nationalist discourse – the sign of 'woman' continued to be inscribed through masculinist ideologies. 'Lata Mangeshkar' is the conjunctional site, then, of the prolix technologies and ideologies of masculinity and patri-



archy, colonialism, Indian nationalism, the relationship between the metropolis and the province, and that between orality and literacy, as well as the modern 'territorialised' understanding of 'culture'. EPW

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Notes

1 Another context, Lata's popularity among the recent Indian diaspora, is a project in itself, and might be explored in the context of contemporary imaginings of 'home' and 'tradition'.

2 Rahul Sankrityayan's *ghummakkad* methodology ({1948} 1994) and Michel Foucault's 'genealogical' analyses (1979; 1990) have, in their different ways, helped me to think about the relationship between discursive and non-discursive realms in a non-teleological manner.

3 I am grateful to Moinak Biswas for raising this issue.

4 The main singers of the *Dholi Gayikayen* ('Female singers with drum accompaniment') group whose recording I possess are Jamila Kulsum and Natha Bai. The *Dholis* are a caste of professional musicians from Rajasthan and commonly perform at Hindu ritual occasions. The singing is accompanied by large drums known as the *Dhol* [Joshi 1994]. I am grateful to Ann Grodzins Gold, Varsha Joshi, Manohar Lalals, Nancy Martin, and Shirley Trembath for responding to my request for information. The recording I have access to was made by the Social Work and Research Centre at Tilonia in Rajasthan, and is part of its archive on folk-music.

5 Cassette recording: *The Festival of India. Volume I.* 1987(?) The Gramophone Company of India. Here, Zohra Bai sings in raag *Bhoopali.*

6 As stated earlier, I am aware of the limitations of such a *description* of voice qualities, and invite the reader acquainted with Indian music to evaluate my statements in light of personal experience. Of course, many will already be familiar with the performers and performances style I refer to, as also with the ritual singing mentioned. From my own experience, the chief criterion for inclusion in the latter is usually perceived kin responsibility, rather than a predefined voice quality; in his autobiography, Mahatma Gandhi was to note that during Hindu marriage ceremonies "women, whether they have a voice or no, sing themselves hoarse" [Gandhi 1990:7].

7 Cassette recording: *The Best of Farida Khanum. Urdu Modern Songs. Volumes One and Two,* 1992. The Gramophone Company of India.

8 The issue of a fortuitous fit between Lata's voice and the technology for public recordings is also sometimes offered as an explanation for its popularity; there is always some merit in arguments that tell us something about the intersection between technology and culture, but to leave matters at this is merely to defer to technological determinism.

9 My most immediate gesture is to recent work in anthropology that has sought to problematise this spatial consciousness within anthropological theory. A representative sample of discussions can be found in Gupta and Ferguson (1992).

10 The milieu I am gesturing at could be better described as constituted through the "patron-performer-audience nexus" [Hansen 1992:251].

11 I could be accused here of falling into the kind of romanticism – based on the speech-writing binary – that Derrida critiques in Levi-Strauss's work. However, one can argue that cultural contexts where orality continues to be a major aspect of social interaction, whilst not intrinsically morally 'superior' to 'writing' contexts (indeed, this would be a banal point), may have different modes of sociality. This may or may not have any implications for the presence or lack of hierarchies, rather, the question is one of investigating the variations of sociality, rather than asking: 'do we really know what writing is?' [Derrida 1976, Johnson 1997]. The issue, specifically, is about the different forms of power (not their lack!) that characterise different interactional contexts. Oral contexts, no matter how contingent, can have their own social and cultural dynamic and this does not, in itself, suggests the reduction of 'textuality' to a "second order ideological expression" [Bhabha 1994:23].

12 Lest this be regarded as a variety of romanticism on behalf of 'tradition', we should remember that even in the relatively structured milieu of an Indian classical music concert in urban India, the audience has considerable scope for (vocal) interaction with the performer [see also Hansen 1992:243-51]; and this in a post-colonial context with a long history of instruction on the 'proper' relationship between audiences and performers. However, I am also mindful of Kathryn Hansen's comment (personal communication) that not all 'traditional' performance genres were necessarily strictly oral, and hence my take on orality may be open to dispute.

13 I am aware that at this time AIR had several Muslim musicians on its staff and recognise that everyday relationships between Hindu and Muslim musicians may, in fact, have been quite cordial. However, meta-discourses – such as those of Hindu nationalism – are not, usually, about complexities of practices.

14 And, although, as Kesavan points out, 'Muslim influence' may not itself be a simple term to define, it is nevertheless one we can meaningfully employ. Further, this is not to suggest that other non-Hindu groups such as Parsis and Christian did not have a presence in the film industry, rather, that at the time Muslims formed a considerable population of film-industry workers, and that the idea of 'Muslim influence' had considerable public currency. I owe this point to a discussion with Kathryn Hansen.

15 *Raiis:* literally, a wealthy man; also a man of leisure, given to 'pleasures'. All translations from Hindustani texts by the author.

16 Hence, the 'professional' singer of Hindi films – as opposed to the 'spontaneously' melodic heroine, who was liable to break out into song at any time in order to express her 'inner' self – was usually the tawaif figure; the (Hindu) heroine who aspired to be a professional singer was usually a representative of the 'modern' woman, and carried within her an unsettling aspect. Illustrative examples of this may be found in the films such as 'Anuradha' (1960), and 'Abhimaan' (1973, both directed by Hrishikesh Mukherjee).

17 See, for example, Premchand's novel *Sewasadan* (1921). This aspect of courtesan characterisation was perhaps most successfully propagated through the medium of Hindi films. So, in films such as 'Kala Pani' (1958; Raj Khosla), 'Sahib Bibi aur Ghulam' (1962; Abrar Alvi), and 'Chitralekha' (1964; Kidar Sharma) the courtesan is a figure of mysterious sophistication.

18 There is another interesting aspect to the aura of middle-class respectability that subsequently gathered around Lata. Her own family background was, in the context of early 20th century culture, an ambiguous one, for her father – Master Dinanath – had been a very well known singer and actor on the Marathi stage and, hence, may have been somewhat at the margins of 'respectable' Maharashtrian society [Bhimani 1995]; to reiterate, his strong opposition to a life on the stage for his daughter, Dinanath is reported to have said that "this work might offer money and fame, but not social standing" [Bhimani 1995:83]. The extent to which Lata's own career also constitutes a drive towards attaining 'respectability' must remain a point of conjecture. I am grateful to Kathy Hansen for raising this issue.

19 This of course begs the question of the grounds of women's attraction to Lata's voice, a research project in itself. However, given what Raheja and Gold (1994) have to say about the abundant 'sexual play' in the songs of rural women in Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, the admiration for Lata's 'pre-sexual' style merits careful scrutiny.

20 From the 1990s, Hindi films have witnessed the incursion of other kinds of female voices, such as those of Ila Arun's in Subhash Ghai's 1993 film 'Khalnayak', and Sapna Awasthi's in the 1998 film 'Dil Se', directed by Mani Ratnam. These 'other' tonalities provide Indian public culture with a resonance that is markedly different from that of Lata's style, as well as pointing to a ferment over the meaning of desirable femininity, or at least to an opening up of the question of feminine identity.

21 Interestingly, Lata's sister Asha Bhonsle, who specialised in providing playback voices for 'non-domesticated' female characters, also occasionally sang in a adolescent-girl voice (e g, in Sahib Bibi aur Ghulam), the Bhanwara bara nadan hai number picturised on Waheeda Rehman). However, these songs were usually regarded as oddities in Asha's repertoire.

22 Of particular interest is Lata's playback role in films which were predominantly about Muslim contexts, such as 'Mere Mehboob' (1963; H S Rawal).

23 Masculinity has had a varied career in Hindi films; for some other examples see Chakravarty (1993), especially chapter six, and Kakar (1990) and Prasad (1998). It should also be added that the singing voices that most typified the FYP hero were those provided by Mohammad Rafi and the 'earlier' Kishore Kumar. And, that the dominance of Lata's voice was part of the same process that established the styles popularised by Rafi and Kishore Kumar as the norms for male singers. I have been led to make this point explicit through a suggestion by Madhava Prasad (personal communication).

24 In a 1922 edition of the *Records of the Indian Museum*, Mahalanobis published a statistical paper entitled 'Anthropological Observations on Anglo-Indians of Calcutta, Part I: Male Stature'; his interest in anthropometry led him to also do some work in England in 1927 on the so-called Pearson's Coefficient of Racial Likeness (information compiled from Rudra 1996, and from the Indian Statistical Institute Website).

25 The following discussion has been adapted from Srivastava 1998, pp 165-67.

26 During the 1970s and 1980s, the epistemological masculinity framework of Hindi films was most prominently undermined by super-star Amitabh Bachchan's film persona (see, for example, Prasad 1998).

27 For a discussion of aspects of the relationship between Indian 'metropolitan' and 'provincial' cultures see Kumar 2003.

28 Film songs play a considerable role in the promotional activities of 'sex-clinic' operators in Delhi and Mumbai. Inasmuch as sexuality has become an important site for expressing contemporary individuality and autonomy, it further highlights the popular association between filmic romance and the possibilities of achieving one's 'full' potential [Srivastava 2004].

29 In the last two decades, Hindi songs lyrics appear to have moved away from the earlier reliance on both the dialects as well as Urdu. This may be due, among other factors, to the urban background of contemporary lyricists, Hindutva politics, NRI audiences, and recognition of the non-middle class audiences for films.

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