

Article

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Devika Rani, The New Woman in The Indian Film Industry During The 1930s-40s

Devika Rani Choudhuri (1908-1994), actor-costume designer-producer, is generally considered the ‘first lady’ of Indian cinemas. In 1942, a fellow actor, Pramila (Esther Victoria Abraham), wrote the following letter to her. Pramila writes:ⁱ

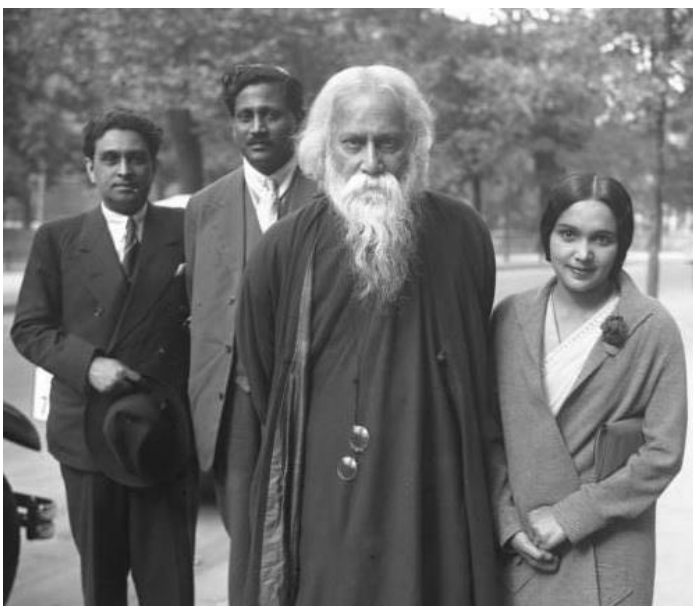
“Dear Devika,

... I am proud to say that you have shown that a lady in India too can be entirely capable of holding supreme sway. We can now say without hesitation that we have a Queen in our midst. Devika – women – all women should be proud that you have won your way. ... Will it be taking too great a liberty to say that you are an [Queen] Elizabeth or a Victoria and like them will wave aside all obstacles... I have always been your admirer and on screen you are still my first favourite. ...

Good luck and best wishes,

Esther (Pramila)”

Devika Rani, however, was hailed as the ‘first lady’, a ‘queen’ or even a ‘Goddess’ not because she came first or she was the only star of the period;ⁱⁱ instead, it is her unique stardom -- as mirrored in the film posters and popular magazines of the times --, as well as her role as a cine-worker, which accentuate her pivotal role in the making of the pioneering Bombay Talkies studios, and draw attention to her persona -- which was ‘modern’ and cosmopolitan off-screen, and that of the ‘new’ Indian woman or ‘*Navina*’ on-screen.ⁱⁱⁱ Moreover, she performed nationalist ideals of social reform and played the Dalit and Adivasi woman in films such as *Acchut Kanya* (dir. Franz Osten, 1936), *Izzat* (dir. Franz Osten, 1937), etc. However, I suggest that her work behind the scenes (for example, as a costume designer in the film *Throw of Dice* [dir. Franz Osten, 1929])) and her collaborations with her (first) husband, producer-director-actor Himansu Rai, truly make her a figure of eminence.



1. Devika Rani with Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore and Himansu Rai (extreme left) in Berlin, 1931. (Source: Wikimedia Commons).



2. Seeta Devi in *Light of Asia* (dir. Osten and Himansu Rai, 1925) and in *Throw of Dice* in which Devika Rani did costume (Source: Wikimedia Commons).

The backdrop of Bombay Talkies

Described (erroneously) as a '*kulin*' (Brahmin) Bengali woman, Devika Rani was, in fact, the grandniece of Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore and, therefore, belonged to the elite, educated, and liberal Brahmo Samaj (monotheist and reformist sect) who were invested in women's education and a modern liberal world-view.^{iv} In reality, Devika Rani's off-screen and on-screen persona wavered between the contemporary cosmopolitan woman and that of *Navina* – the 'new' woman or the quintessential *Bhadramohila*. Devika Rani was educated in Europe; she studied architecture, make-up, and textile design in London. After that, Devika Rani and Himansu Rai, a lawyer turned visionary film entrepreneur (also educated in Tagore's 'Santiniketan'), met via Niranjan Pal (screenwriter) and married in 1928. Devika Rani and Rai subsequently joined the top-notch UFA Studios in Germany. Devika Rani famously assisted the celebrated star Marlene Dietrich on the sets of *The Blue Angel* (dir. Josef von Sternberg, 1930). Here, she learnt techniques of make-up and filmmaking. Eventually, the situation in Europe turned critical; with Adolf Hitler being elected as the Chancellor of Germany in 1933, they shifted (first to England and then) to India. But, it was at the Babelsberg site of the upscale German studio that Devika Rani and Rai learnt the basics of filmmaking, and they had the opportunity to observe the production practices of renowned European directors and actors such as Fritz Lang, G. W. Pabst and Emil Jannings.

After Devika Rani and Rai moved to Bombay and set up Bombay Talkies studios at Malad, several German technicians joined the company as part of their esteemed team. At Bombay Talkies, therefore, Franz Osten worked as director, Joseph Wirsching headed the camera department, Karl von Spreiti (designated as architect) undertook the responsibility of production design, and Len Hartley controlled the sound department; moreover, as mentioned by Debashree Mukherjee (2019: 56) about "300 students were interviewed in the first year itself" for jobs at the studio, as in the case of New Theatres, and Prabhat Film Co. Pune, the studio effectively operated as a training institute for young and aspiring filmmakers.

Indeed, many filmmakers and artists were trained at Bombay Talkies, including actors such as Ashok Kumar and Leela Chitnis, directors like KA Abbas, Gyan Mukherjee, Sashadhar Mukherjee, and others. The cosmopolitan crew was further expanded by the entry of the Parsi music director, Khoshrid Homji or Saraswati

Devi (screen name), and choreographer Mumtaz Ali, who collectively “brought together influences from German Expressionist theatre and cinema, Bengal School portraiture, Orientalist adaptations of Sanskrit literature, British socialist plays, modern Bengali reformist novels, Art Deco industrial design, Bauhaus textile design, Hindustani classical music, and kathak dance conventions” (Debashree Mukherjee, 2019: 57). During its hey-day Bombay Talkies had about 400 employees on its payrolls. With its state-of-the-art studio in Malad, it was a joint stock company with an authorised capital of Rs. 25 lakhs. A Board of Directors, comprising some distinguished businessmen and politicians from Bombay, ran the show (Debashree Mukherjee 2019). Along with certain studios like New Theatres Ltd., Kolkata, Bombay Talkies was seemingly modelling itself on the lines of contemporary international and Hollywood studios, and therefore, the studio acquired high-end equipment, multiple sound stages, and a processing laboratory. It had designated departments for costume, make-up, art and props, scenario writing, etc.^v Bombay Talkies had set up onsite medical facilities, a canteen, and a recreation room, which was a norm with the big studios of the period. About Bombay Talkies, Devika Rani wrote the following to John Lent (in 1981).^{vi} She writes (published in Lent, 2010: 14):

Of course, there were many problems, but we wished to establish the Bombay Talkies as a natural institution based on a fine business. Everyone who worked came from perfect families and was academically qualified and sent to us by various Chancellors of Universities. Some of the leading people today belong to our Company. We had foreign Technicians who were first-class people, and they trained our technical staff. It is such a long story

Nonetheless, film production in a tropical climate during the late colonial period was never easy. Eleanor Halsall draws from the writings of Karl von Spreti (published in *Times of India*) and spotlights the difficulties of setting up a pioneering studio. Halsall writes (on her blog):^{vii}

Furnishing a studio ready for filming was one thing; managing Malad’s exotic wildlife was quite another! Von Spreti had barely settled in before he wrote, ‘on Friday afternoon there was a big hunt here as two snakes were killed, one 2 ½ m the other 1.80-2m’ (1 April 1935). ... And those destructive rodents? Having made preparations for their first film, *Jawani-ki-hawa* (Spirit of Youth), von Spreti complained bitterly: ‘The rats, those brutes, ate my film set because they got a taste for the *paper maché*. As long as I still need this set, I must leave a night watch in the studio’ (15 July 1935).

Furthermore, the workers were heavily overburdened,^{viii} and borrowing from the notes of von Spreti, Halsall elaborates how:

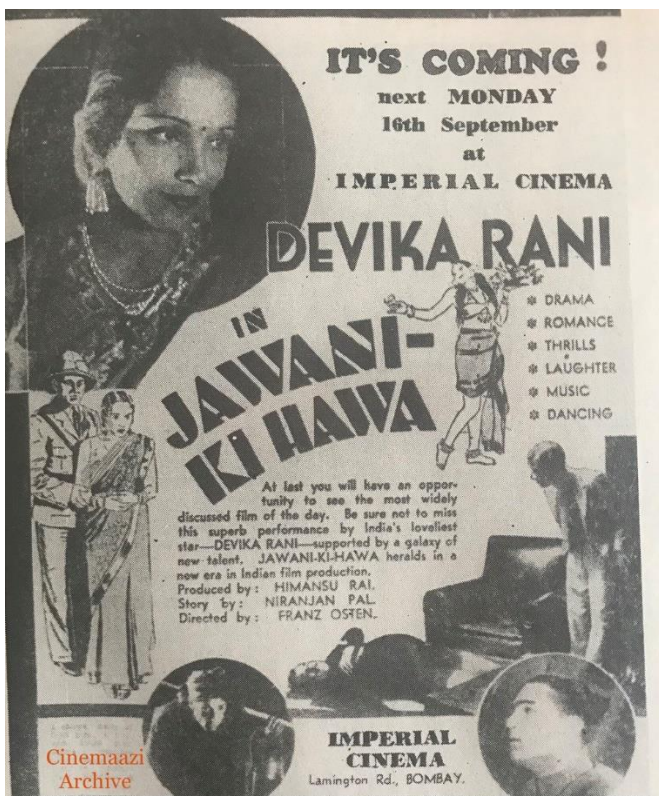
The Studio’s workforce proliferated.... He [von Spreti] took health and safety seriously. On the first day of the shooting, he reported: ‘We almost lost a worker who came into contact with the high voltage’ (1 April 1935). Anxious to avoid accidents, he remonstrated with Rai and Osten, who wanted to carry on filming, using people who had been working all night: This worried Rai, who asked for my opinion, after that I voted to suspend the work, much to Osten’s fury’ (15 April 1936). In July 1937, von Spreti wrote, ‘We have been working from 08:00-12:00 and 15:00-03:00, day and night for the last 3-4 weeks: no free Sunday, and the same people without a shift change. No worker [in Germany] would tolerate this, and neither would it be allowed’ (17 July 1937).

Clearly, films were made with blood and sweat in the heat, dust, and rain, and through some degree of exploitation of the employees (which included actors); moreover, during the making, the personnel battled

ecological conditions and natural constraints, and the high aspirations of the companies often collided with the dire conditions of a colonised country.



3. Devika Rani and Najmul Hasan in *Jawani ki hawa* (dir. Franz Osten, 1935). (Source: Wikimedia Commons).



4. *Jawani ki hawa* advertisement. (Source: Cinemaazi archive).

The films and the rising star

Roshni Nair writes a brief note on the film *Jawani ki hawa*^{ix} and suggests that the film was “a whodunit” movie in which Kamala (Devika Rani) “elopes with her childhood friend and lover (Ratanlal, played by Hasan) on the day of her marriage”. Although the couple escapes by a train, Kamala’s father eventually catches up on board and forces her to marry a man of his choice, and soon, “a murder follows”. Nair further proposes

that the “film’s plotline bears many similarities to the Agatha Christie mystery *Murder on the Orient Express*, which had just been published in 1934”. Nevertheless, Bombay Talkies made social reform films, generally described as (studio) “socials” by film scholars, which foregrounded strong female protagonists, played mainly by Devika Rani (who figured at the centre of the publicity material).^[1] Such social films – like *Janma Bhoomi* (dir. Franz Osten, 1936) and *Acchut Kanya* (dir. Franz Osten, 1936) -- were less of a formal style (or genre); instead, these were thematically attentive to contemporary social conditions, dealt with ‘social-situatedness’, and imagined social reform via the activated roles of the protagonists. ‘Socials’ became a hold-all term to describe films set in modern times, which popularised societal images and often tackled ethical dilemmas concerning dignity, equality, and honesty.^x Through her performances as the Dalit and Adivasi woman, Devika Rani played out Brahminical concerns about a new nation’s social upliftment, reform, and imagination.^{xi}



5. *Izzat*, in which Devika Rani performs the role of Adivasi, and *Jeevan Prabhat*, in which she plays a Brahmin woman. (Source: Wikimedia Commons).



6. Devika Rani as a college student in *Nirmala* (dir. Franz Osten, 1938).

Contemporary magazines like *Film India* and journalists like KA Abbas regularly compared Bombay Talkies with films produced by other studios such as New Theatres and Prabhat Film Co., Pune, and questioned their understanding of reform.^{xii} Furthermore, the transition from silent films to “Talkies” transpired across

territories in the early thirties. Companies like Ranjit Movietone, Sagar Movietone, Wadia Movietone, and particularly New Theatres and Prabhat (who were already forerunners in the field), as well as several singers, composers, and performers, were at the forefront.^{xiii} Besides, New Theatres' all-India singing sensations such as KL Saigal and Kanan Bala (aka Devi), alongside their illustrious directors like P C Barua, Debaki Bose and Nitin Bose, and Prabhat's three great female stars, Durga Khote, Shanta Hublikar, and Shanta Apte (along with their celebrated actor-director V Shantaram) regularly featured in the popular magazines.^{xiv} Such influential studios were invested in the new 'Talkie' mode and were instrumental in constructing the idealised, modern, iconic figure – the cinematic couple.^{xv}

Sangita Gopal (2011: 26) suggests that:^{xvi}

As a quintessential sign of the modern, romantic love is a favoured subject of cinema globally... The centrality of romance in Indian cinema must, therefore, be viewed in this light: as technology was introduced to India, so was the celluloid couple....

Writing about the popular Bombay Talkies film *Acchut Kanya*, Gopal (2011: 35) further adds that: "Main Ban Ke Chidiya" (I am a bird of the forest) shows all the features of the romantic duet identified above, including the spatial centring of the romantic couple in a pastoral setting, the back-and-forth between Kasturi [Devika Rani] and Pratap [Ashok Kumar] that establishes mutuality alternating with a frontal address that endows the couple with iconic value; and lyrics that dream of metamorphoses—the lovers wish to turn into birds of the wild and take flight from a world that proscribes their love.

Additionally, *Gregory Booth* (2008) mentions how Bombay Talkies played an active part in introducing the dubbing of songs for their stars – Ashok Kumar and Devika Rani – with more proficient voices.^{xvii} Therefore, Bombay Talkies' films preceded the dominant melodramatic mode produced in Bombay during the 1950s-60s.^{xviii}

Likewise, as Ashish Rajadhyaksha (1993) argued, Bombay Talkies developed and deployed the star value, creating a face that could be used as the centre of the publicity material.^{xix} Despite the critical reviews of Devika Rani's (or the elite woman's) portrayal of the 'untouchable girl' (*Acchut Kanya*) and of her glamorous demeanour and her accent, the film was appreciated for its "histrionic merit and sympathetic understanding"; in addition, the reviews suggested that the film and the part played by Devika Rani put her "at the head of India's screen stars, which Garbo herself could hardly^[SEP]surpass" (Ravi Vasudevan, 1995: 2810).^{xx}

Truly, (the 1920s and) the 1930s were the era of exceptional female stars, which included Sabita Devi of Sagar Movietone, Gohar of Ranjit Studios, 'beauty-queen' Naseem Banu of Minerva Movietone, and the 'stunt-queen' Nadia of Wadia Movietone.^{xxi} To echo Ravi Vasudevan (1995: 2810), these stars provided "a spectacle of social pathos while also establishing India's capacity to produce a star commodity that could compete at an international level." In fact, from the Bombay Talkies' first film, *Jawani ki hawa*, onwards, their film publicity put themes of modernity and the modern woman at the centre of their print publicity. Furthermore, Devika Rani addressed her audiences through the radio, underlining her distinction as "one of the first Indian ladies to broadcast on the short-wavelength on the BBC and to give a television programme in London in 1933" (Vasudevan 1995: 2810).

Vasudevan further argues that the modern woman was a 'public media personality' who was also a role model. Therefore, Devika Rani's star persona of a modern woman vacillated between her on-screen and off-screen

performances, which included attending special 'zenana' shows of their films and meeting with women viewers. Bombay Talkies was a state-of-the-art, cosmopolitan, modern studio concerned about more significant social reform issues. So, to borrow from Vasudevan (1995: 2810) with “Bombay Talkies, we can observe how commodity value, reformism and modernity are bound together in its enterprise. Indeed, the commodity field constituted by star and studio may have been central to articulating the ideology of modernity...”.

The late-colonial period was the moment when debates around the “inner/outer world” and the “ghar and bahir” (Partha Chatterjee 1993) were evident, fervently, at the discursive level.^{xxii} Therefore, one may argue that Devika Rani’s social standing, English education, elite upbringing, commitment to social causes, and uses of media forms (radio, print, cinema) made her appear as a modern cosmopolitan woman; although her on-screen persona (as mentioned earlier), was gentler, more demure, more conservative to an extent, despite the attractive sleeveless blouses and the modern sarees which she created and adorned. Briefly, on-screen, she was more of a *Bhadromohila*, speaking to the dynamics and dilemmas of the inner/outer worlds (of the period). Her social reformist on-screen roles, vis-à-vis her fashionable saris made of imported material, the beautiful curls on her strong forehead, and pencilled eyebrows (like Marlene Dietrich and Great Garbo), put her at the locus of manifold fantasies of a new and possible world. Devika Rani’s face, placed at the centre of Bombay Talkies film posters, thus “became a polysemic site that spoke differently to different spectators” (Vasudevan 1995).

While with the outbreak of the Second World War, Bombay Talkies’ German employees were forced to return to Germany or were deported to camps (except for Josef Wirsching), like most of the studios, Bombay Talkies continued to operate, even though Himansu Rai’s death in 1940 was detrimental for the studio. Yet, even when Devika Rani was appointed as the Controller of Productions, by 1943, a group of Bombay Talkies’ actors, directors, writers, and technicians – namely Rai Bahadur Chuni Lal, Sashadhar Mukherjee, Ashok Kumar, Savak Vacha and others – left Bombay Talkies to form the legendary Filmistan Ltd.^{xxiii} Moreover, in 1945, Devika Rani married the Russian painter Svetoslav Roerich and went to Bombay Talkies. So, although Savak Vacha and Ashok Kumar returned to Bombay Talkies during 1946-47, such was the times -- marred by war, riots, and partition – that it was a ‘curtain call’ for Bombay Talkies (and for several other big studios of the period) eventually. To evoke Saadat Hasan Manto’s words from *Stars from Another Sky* (translated in 1998), the “street leads nowhere,” so they took a “side” turn.



7. Devika Rani and Himansu Rai in *Karma*. (Source: Wikimedia Commons).



8. Devika Rani, in her fashionable saris, with Ashok Kumar in *Nirmala* (Source: Wikimedia Commons)

The Goddess, the Queen, and a Cine-worker

Priti Ramamurthy (2006) writes about the “Indian Modern Girl,” whose iconic identity was wildly popular in multiple media. Ramamurthy (2006: 203) mentions how:^{xxiv}

College girls (*kallege ladki*) were at the centre of several movies, usually enmeshed in complicated love triangles. Several were about women who were movie stars, telephone operators, and beauty queens. In short, these screen personalities were convincingly modern: they lived in a metropolitan world, were members of a cosmopolitan set, and partook in the institutions of contemporary life, whether college, city, or cinema.

So, I am thinking through *Nirmala* (dir. Franz Osten, 1938), one of the few films of Devika Rani which has survived (digitally), in which she performs a ‘college girl’, as well as the landmark Indo-German-English production by Himansu Rai, *Karma* (dir. Freer Hunt, 1933), in which she essays the role of a modern princess. In the second sequence of *Karma*, for instance, in which the Maharaja becomes aware of the liaison between his son (the Prince, played by Himansu Rai) and the Princess of Sitapur (played by Devika Rani), he mentions how even her father would have been appalled by her ideas. He asks: “What will she modernise? Convert our temples into hospitals? Our palaces into schools? And, our rice fields into playgrounds?” This embodiment of a ‘free spirit’ and its many performances on and off-screen make Devika Rani the fabled figure of Indian cinemas.

Devika Rani’s debut via the international talkie *Karma* (in 1933) created a buzz amongst the European elite circles, and her performance -- especially in the last sequence of the film -- demonstrated a realistic performative style which was remarkably different from the contemporary kind of histrionics (in India). One may argue that Devika Rani’s stardom emerged through multiple media forms -- her careful portraiture shots (executed by Josef Wirsching), the full-page photo plates that were printed in popular magazines, the placement of her alluring images as a central picture in the posters, her carefully constructed saris and modern blouses, her effervescent performances – which mirrored the new world Bombay Talkies projected in their films.

Radhika Raghav (2020) discusses in what way the tea-drinking scene between Nirmala (Devika Rani) and her friend Pramila present contemporary desires for modernity;^{xxv} moreover, I underscore how the film bears other signs of the aspired modern world, which include gadgets such as telephone, the camera, and also involves more feminine gestures such as knitting. Similarly, regarding *Karma*'s opening sequence, Radhika Raghav (2020: 163) writes about her fashionable *leheriya* sari and sleeveless blouse and further mentions:^{xxvi}

Not covering the head with the sari conveys that the character of the princess does not conform to the traditional ... system,.

Devika adopts *leheriya* and lends a contemporary touch by matching the colourful sari with a minimalistic white blouse. ... Her hair is styled with cascading waves that softly frame her face ..., adding glamour and sophistication to her image. This particular sari exemplifies how Rani developed her distinctive persona as a star in this film by wearing sleek fashions and diaphanous fabrics that highlighted her slender petite figure, a body type that was in keeping with current European ideals.

Priti Ramamurthy (2006) also highlights how clothes – the saris and blouses – became particularly innovative and even ‘transgressive’ during the 1920s and 1930s. Borrowing from both traditional wear, as well as from Western and East Asian fashion, and cutting across religious markers, her saris were sometimes worn in Parsee style and on other occasions like the inventive Tagore-house style, which were clipped firmly and beautifully with decorative brooches. At the same time, the blouses were often sleeveless (with frills and designs). Even the material of the saris resonated with the advertisements of saris of the period and was mostly of fashionable materials such as georgette, crepe, silk, and chiffon. Briefly, the “Indian Modern Girl coded herself as a global modern through her intimate and hybrid body fashioning, her [carefree] body language and sartorial zest” (Ramamurthy, 2006: 208).



9. Publicity image of the ‘modern girl’ Devika Rani (author’s collection).



10. Song-booklet of *Hamari Baat* (dir. Dharamsey, 1943, Devika Rani's last film. (author's collection).

I, moreover, describe the 'costume design' done by Naseem Banu (including her job in *Throw of Dice*) as *work*. Writing about 'scandals' and 'scandalous' silences vis-à-vis women's labour in the film industry and about the career of Naseem Banu, Debashree Mukherjee (2013) underscores in what way Naseem's mother mobilised her career, and later the manner in which she planned the career and costumes for her daughter Saira Banu.^{xxvii} I have discussed elsewhere (2020) how Naseem Banu employed tailors and embroiderers to create clothes and designed jewellery for her daughter.^{xxviii} Saadat Hasan Manto's (1998) narrative about "Pari-chehera Naseem" becomes significant in this regard. For instance, Manto's book closes with a compassionate note on Naseem Banu. While Manto was not particularly impressed by Naseem Banu's on-screen performances, he writes, in great detail, the manner in which she worked on the costumes of her husband's productions. Manto (1998: 176) elaborates how:

When *Begum* [1945] went into production, she took charge of the costume department. It was estimated that the costumes would cost ten to twelve thousand rupees, but to save money [since it was her husband's production], she had a tailor permanently installed in her house, to whom she gave all her old saris, shirts [kurtas] and ghararas [wide pajamas], with detailed directions on how to stitch the costumes we would need.

Whereas it's challenging to find Naseem Banu's credit for the work she did as a customer designer and the (intangible/tangible) investments she made, I have discussed elsewhere (2020) how Naseem Banu's style of working was unmistakably like any other proficient costume designer. Similarly, accounts of women's uncredited and subsequently unpaid work in the costume (and other) department – which create the *mise-en-scene* of any film – are also noticeable in later years. For example, Vyjayanthimala, a well-known actress of the 1960s, recalls how her mother coordinated with the art department and the director and selected colours, materials, designs, and jewellery for the landmark film *Madhumati* (dir. Bimal Roy, 1958).

If Debashree Mukherjee's (2013) conversations with Dr. Sushila Rani Patel (journalist, singer, actress, married to Baburao Patel, and the ghostwriter of the celebrated film magazine *Filmindia*), demonstrates how, during the early period, there weren't *any* woman working in the departments of film production, her interview with Ram Tipnis (in 2010),^{xxxix} the veteran make-up artist, shows in what way there were few female hairdressers in the studios; though, generally, 'actresses' brought their domestic workers and/or their mothers to assist them with costume and makeup.^{xxx} So, in the way women's history in the film industry unfolds, there were actresses and wives behind the illustrious film directors and producers (like Devika Rani, Naseem Banu and others) who supported film production. Moreover, behind the actresses were their mothers, sisters and personal aids who doubled as managers, costume designers, and even, in some instances, operated as financial advisers and caregivers and perhaps did errands during the shoot. Such a study, thus, presents the picture of an entire 'army of women cine-workers', whose names have gone missing from the annals of history and who are disremembered even as we re-write new histories of the period.

I, therefore, argue that even though a meticulous reading of the credits of the films brings forth names of a few women cine-workers, nonetheless, by and large, most of the work done by women has been unrecognised, unpaid and regarded as part of the familial job, even though several female stars of the period had financial power and personal independence.^{xxxii} In short, while successful 'actresses' yielded substantial power and the studios used their iconic star values when the same actresses worked behind the scenes, their labour was largely unaccounted for. I therefore enquire: while 'costume' design is effectively one of the primary aspects of film production and the filmic world, how did the job done by a host of women go unseen?

Radhika Raghav elaborates on how Devika Rani worked for *Acchut Kanya* and created the costumes for the film. Raghav (2020: 166) writes:

She relied on an ethnographic approach of visualising a look for her on-screen persona as a village belle and actively incorporating local weaves, colour patterns and Indian block prints in natural dyes into her public appearances as a media celebrity. She drew upon designs in the photographic references and specimens her peers travelling into the hinterlands sent her. Her knowledge of fabrics and patterns enabled her to adapt local dresses into film costumes and re-adapt them as off-screen wear. This was useful in giving an uninterrupted home-grown Indian identity to her star persona in the fans' minds, thereby creating a sense of identification with her spectators.

Such narratives show how Devika Rani became an epitome of the 'new woman' and highlight the work behind the scenes and the ways in which she laboured towards producing films during the 1930s.

While the absence of archival material, as we strive to write histories of women's labour in the film industry, ail us and provoke us to imagine alternative histories, Josef Wirsching's archive presents glimpses of Devika Rani's persona at work – sometimes resting, relaxing, eating, smiling, talking;^{xxxiii} in addition, the letters penned by her reflect both her knowledge and her involvement with Bombay Talkies and film production. However, the absence of any systematic documentation of Indian cinemas, even of someone as formidable as Devika Rani, makes this journey of revisiting the history of film production through a feminist lens both challenging and meaningful. Recent exhibitions of Bombay Talkies' archival photographs or circulation of her images and films (as video uploads) via the internet, alongside theatrical performances and new publications, make narratives of women cine-workers ephemeral, enigmatic, yet effective and unfading.^{xxxiiii}

- ⁱ From Mukherjee, Debashree. "Letter from an unknown woman: The film actress in late colonial Bombay." *MARG* 62, no. 4 (2011): 54-65.
- ⁱⁱ See Part 1 of Mehta, Monika, and Madhuj Mukherjee, eds. *Industrial Networks and Cinemas of India: Shooting Stars, Shifting Geographies and Multiplying Media*. New York & London: Taylor & Francis, 2021.
- ⁱⁱⁱ I am referring to the classic nineteenth-century article by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay 'Prachina ebang Navina', which was initially published in the journal *Bangadarshan*. The article produced a frame for the new educated woman vis-à-vis women of the earlier times. While Partha Chatterjee (in *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994) presents a path breaking analysis of these issues, Satyajit Ray problematizes the role of *navina-prachina*, as well as that of the *bhadralok*, in *Charulata* (1964).
- ^{iv} See Karlekar, Malavika. "Kadambini and the Bhadrakalok: Early debates over women's education in Bengal." *Economic and Political Weekly* (1986): WS25-WS31 & Bagchi, Barnita. "Towards Ladyland: Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain and the movement for women's education in Bengal, c. 1900–c. 1932." *Paedagogica Historica* 45, no. 6 (2009): 743-755.
- ^v See Mukherjee, Madhuj. "When Was the 'Studio Era' in Bengal: Transition, Transformations and Configurations During 1930s." *Widescreen Journal* 8, no. 1 (2019).
- ^{vi} See Lent, John A. "Conversations with Actress Devika Rani Roerich and Painter Svetoslav Roerich (1980)." *Asian Cinema* 21, no. 1 (2010): 3-38.
- ^{vii} See <https://studiotec.info/2022/08/09/the-rats-have-eaten-my-set-letters-from-a-german-film-architect-in-1930s-india/> <accessed on 24th December 2022>.
- ^{viii} See Mukherjee, Debashree. "Somewhere between Human, Nonhuman, and Woman: Shanta Apte's Theory of Exhaustion." *Feminist Media Histories* 6, no. 3 (2020): 21-51 & Madhuj Mukherjee "Bodies in Waiting: Remapping Gender, Labour, and Histories of the Indian Film Industry (1930s–1950s)", *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol. 57, no. 22 (2022), 60-68.
- ^{ix} See: <https://nairroshni.wordpress.com/2014/03/09/the-man-who-missed-the-train/> <accessed on 14th September 2022 >
- ^x See Vasudevan, Ravi. "Registers of action: melodrama and film genre in 1930s India." *Screen* 58, no. 1 (2017): 64-72 & Vasudevan, Ravi. "The melodramatic mode and the commercial Hindi cinema: Notes on film history, narrative and performance in the 1950s." *Screen* 30, no. 3 (1989): 29-50.
- ^{xi} For a critical reading of *Izzat* see Mukherjee, Debashree. "The Aesthetic and Material Force of Landscape in Cinema: Mediating Meaning from the Scene of Production." *Representations* 157, no. 1 (2022): 115-141.
- ^{xii} See Mukherjee, Madhuj. *New Theatres Ltd.: The Emblem of Art, the Picture of Success*. Pune: NFAI, 2009.
- ^{xiii} See Mukherjee, Madhuj. "To speak or not to speak: Publicity, public opinion and the transition to talkies, Calcutta 1931–35." *Indian Sound Cultures, Indian Sound Citizenship*. ed.s Laura Brueck, Jacob Smith, Neil Verma. Michigan: University of Michigan Press (2020): 268-296.
- ^{xiv} Also see Mukherjee, Madhuj, ed. *Aural Films, Oral Cultures: Essays on Cinema: from the Early Sound Era*. Jadavpur University Press, 2012.
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