

Brides Who Travel: Gender, Transnationalism, and Nationalism in Hindi Film

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In this essay I examine *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* [The lover wins the bride], an immensely popular Hindi film about overseas Indians, as a lens for studying how notions of belonging, territoriality, and nation have been reconstructed in contemporary India. Released in 1995, *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (which many middle-class viewers know as *DDLJ*), was neither unprecedented nor unique in its depiction of overseas Indians. To my mind, however, the film signaled the reconfiguration of axes of homeland and diaspora, location and identity, occurring in the postliberalization conjuncture in India. In what follows, I explore *DDLJ*'s representations of nonresident Indians in order to examine the constitution of national and transnational subjects at the intersection of discourses of gender, sexuality, capital, and desire.

This article is written from the perspective of a feminist critic of popular

culture and a fan and avid consumer of Hindi film. Not coincidentally, it is also written from the location of a diasporic woman, a bride who traveled. My positionality as a nonresident Indian (NRI), a woman who moved abroad to live with her husband, and as a feminist with complex and ambivalent relationships with my homeland is inescapable. As a diasporic scholar, I have struggled to construct what I have elsewhere termed a politics of bifocality, a politics of solidarity with and accountability to communities of struggle in both my homes, thus problematizing binaries of home versus diaspora.¹

Such a politics of bifocality rests on a negotiation of the fraught relationship between feminist theorizing and activism. This essay is deeply influenced by my experiences with South Asian survivors of domestic violence. Thus, although I resist using these experiences as grist for the academic mill, they shape my perspective as a feminist within the academy, in particular, my pedagogy and my theorizing. Most importantly, my positionality as an activist and as an Indian woman abroad compel me to recognize the importance of discourses of nation and gender for the constitution of diasporic subjectivities. I have learned that such apparently benign constructs as *Indian culture*, *Indian Womanhood*, and the *Indian Family* can sometimes become sites for violence against women in diaspora.²

My understanding of transnationalism draws on Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan's use of the term to "problematize a purely locational politics of global-local or center-periphery in favor of . . . the lines cutting across them."³ Analysts of transnational culture have noted the centrality of mass media to the construction of ideas about nationhood, gender, and family in both the homeland and the diaspora. Mass media are among the most crucial channels of socialization among diasporic communities,⁴ and they play a crucial role in the creation of imaginary homelands for diasporic subjects.⁵ Drawing on the work of Walter Benjamin, film theorist Ravi Vasudevan has pointed to cinema's "generation of the reproducible image [that] allows for its extended circulation, and with it, the possibility of an extended circulation of subjectivity. A new public sphere is heralded, constituting new horizons of experience."⁶ Cultural studies examinations of cinematic texts have included narrative analyses and close readings of a film's semiotic codes and formal modes of address, examinations of the relationship

between aesthetics and politics, and analyses of the reception of these texts. Most of my other work in mass media has consisted of ethnographic analyses of the reception of popular texts. In this article, however, I situate cinematic diegesis vis-à-vis changing configurations of political economy in postliberalization India. Cinematic diegesis is a crucial site for the playing out of ideological frameworks that structure narrative, and I trace how the diegesis of *DDLJ* foregrounds particular discursive chains relating to nationhood, gender, and territoriality.

Several scholars have insisted that we attend to the historical specificities (and heterogeneities) of contemporary formations of diaspora.⁷ Khachig Tololyan, for instance, has pointed out that, while multicultural colonial empires have existed for centuries, the past five decades have seen a “cultural and political regrouping” of ethnonations that exist “across the boundaries of established nation-states” so as to compel the redefinition of diasporas.⁸ The term *diaspora* foregrounds a field of relationships with a *homeland*, with the homeland signifying an imaginative, and occasionally imagined, space of longing, struggle, and ambivalence. Diasporas are marked by shifting relationships with homelands, relationships that are sometimes, but not always, configured in terms of nationhood; for instance, the diasporic Punjabi community that settled in California in the early part of the twentieth century did not, to begin with, define itself vis-à-vis the Indian nation. At the same time, as Tololyan cautions, “to affirm that diasporas are the exemplary communities of the transnational moment is not to write the premature obituary of the nation-state, which remains a privileged form of polity.”⁹ What do the cluster of discourses enacted in *DDLJ*’s representations of NRIs teach us about the place of nationalist desire in a transnational world? I use my analysis of this film as an opportunity to engage and intervene in ongoing debates about diaspora, transnationalism, and postcoloniality.

It seems particularly dangerous to equate the privilege of the NRIs portrayed in *DDLJ* (and categorized as such by the Indian government) with the circumstances negotiated by other diasporic peoples, such as working-class immigrants, migrant laborers, political and economic refugees, and exiles. In fact, a crucial part of my task in this essay is to show how, in popular and official discourses about NRIs, overseas Indians are classed (and

gendered) in ways that elide the struggles of less-privileged diasporic peoples. At the same time, while the identities of NRIs may not be shaped by violent histories of displacement, like those of many other diasporic peoples, NRIs occupy a political and affective space produced through its marriage with notions of the homeland and, in the modern conjuncture, the nation.

I use the word *marriage* deliberately, to foreground the role of gender and heterosexual privilege folded into the very construction of the term *diaspora*. Stefan Helmreich returns us to the etymology of *diaspora* by pointing out that it is derived from the Greek terms for dispersion and “to sow or scatter.”¹⁰ Hence, Helmreich points out, “the original meaning of diaspora summons up the image of scattered seeds and, therefore, to male substance, that is, to sperm.”¹¹ He argues that “diaspora, in its traditional sense, thus refers us to a system of kinship reckoned through men and suggests the questions of legitimacy in paternity that patriarchy generates.”¹² In this manner the very term *diaspora*, as deployed in academic and popular discourse, is rooted in discourses of gender and kinship based on heterosexual privilege. In this essay I engage the metonymy of family and nation in *DDLJ*’s representations of diaspora and homeland in order to examine how its construction of discourses of belonging and nationhood are fundamentally gendered and (hetero)sexualized.

Briefly, *DDLJ* is about two lovers, Simran and Raj, who are NRIs living in England. When Simran’s father learns of their love, he moves the family to his village in Punjab, where he plans to have Simran married to the son of his childhood friend. Raj follows Simran to Punjab. When he arrives there, he announces that he is interested in investing capital in India by opening a factory. He is immediately befriended by Simran’s fiancé and is welcomed with open arms by his and Simran’s families. But when Simran’s father and fiancé learn that Raj is really there so he can marry Simran, they are enraged. Raj and his father, who had subsequently arrived in Punjab to help his son win Simran’s hand in marriage, are forced to leave the village. But just as they are about to depart, Simran arrives at the railway station where they are waiting for the next train out. At the last minute Simran’s father relents and gives his approval of their marriage, and she leaves with Raj and his father. The lovers are finally reunited and, presumably, live happily ever after.

The term nonresident Indian, or NRI, itself reveals a negotiation of identity that pushes the boundaries of location in that it signifies a nonresident who can, nonetheless, be Indian. In my analysis of *DDLJ* I focus on representations of the West as an ambivalent site of desire, discourses of Indian women's sexuality, and constructions of Indian tradition. My objective is to examine how *DDLJ*'s representations of NRIs enable us to trace the reconstitution of belonging, identity, and gender in postcolonial India.

Representations of the West

When I watched *DDLJ* one cold winter evening in New Delhi, I was reminded of another film, *Purab aur Paschim* [East and West], which was released in 1970. Like *DDLJ*, *Purab aur Paschim* was also a colossal hit, and like *DDLJ*, it also focused on the negotiation of Indianness, particularly on the part of Indians living abroad. While their depictions of overseas Indians are very different, both films mediate the relationship between colonial metropole and the postcolony, between the West and the East (not coincidentally, in both these films the West is identified with Britain), and between diaspora and homeland through the creation of gendered subjectivities. Relating these texts to the historical contexts in which they were produced and received, I wish to trace how they represent different moments in postcolonial Indian nationalism. My objective is to see how these films signal shifting notions of belonging in relation to changing configurations of gender and sexuality and intensified flows of transnational and multinational capital.

Why do I characterize the nationalist discourses created by *DDLJ* and *Purab aur Paschim* as postcolonial? To my mind, postcoloniality does not designate a moment of unambiguous rupture with the colonial past but, instead, signifies the ubiquitous presence of the colonial past in the present. This understanding of postcoloniality rests on the premise that decolonization does not occur along a linear trajectory (as in the teleological fantasies of anticolonial nationalists), but that it constitutes a series of discontinuous and uneven processes and is characterized by multiple temporalities. My use

of the term *postcoloniality* draws upon Stuart Hall's suggestion that "what the concept *may* help us to do is to describe or characterize the shift in global relations which marks the necessarily uneven transition from the age of Empires to the post-independence or post-decolonisation moment."¹³

Relationships between past and present as well as between here (the homeland, the nation) and there (variously, the colonial metropole, abroad, the diaspora) are configured quite differently in *Purab aur Paschim* and *DDLJ*. *Purab aur Paschim* begins in the colonial past. The opening scenes are in grainy black and white and portray nationalist struggles against colonialism in terms of martyrdom and betrayal. It is 1942. As the titles roll, we see scenes of anticolonial agitation and the violent repression of nationalist dissent by the colonial police. The camera focuses on Om, a nationalist agitator, who is trying to hide from the police. Om is betrayed to the police by one of his compatriots, Harnam. Harnam is a traitor twice over. First, he betrays the cause of anticolonial struggle by leading the police to the fugitive nationalist; subsequently, after collecting his reward, he kidnaps his own son and flees to Britain in order to raise him in the manner of the British. Britain, *vilayat*, and the West form a signifying chain associated with colonial violence, betrayal, and as the film unfolds, moral pollution.

DDLJ, on the other hand, is anchored in the present. We are introduced to Baldev, a middle-aged Indian man feeding pigeons in London. Baldev compares the plight of the pigeons to his own state of homelessness. Just as they must travel in search of food, so must he. He remarks that despite the fact that he has been here half his life, the land still feels alien to him; nobody knows him here, except the pigeons. He adds that he feels trapped by his (financial) needs, yet he dreams that one day he will return home to his nation, to his Punjab.

In subsequent scenes we see how careful Baldev is to maintain Indian culture in his home. His primary mode of doing so is through his surveillance of his wife and daughters. His success in preserving Indian culture is represented in a scene in which we see his elder daughter, Simran, singing a Hindu hymn (*bhajan*) and praying. Indian culture is thus conflated with Hindu culture. This scene also foregrounds the responsibility of daughters to carry on the traditions of the family, the community, and the nation.

We learn that Baldev has promised Simran's hand to the son of his child-

hood friend back home in the Punjab. But in her travels in Europe, Simran meets and falls in love with another NRI, Raj. When she returns to London, she confides her love for Raj to her mother. Her father overhears the conversation between mother and daughter and is furious. He decides that the family must move to India the very next morning. His drastic decision and the family's precipitous departure for India is driven by his fear of losing control over his daughter. It is clear to him that he can recuperate the family honor only by returning to India and getting her married, thereby transferring control of her sexuality to her husband and in-laws "back home."

In *DDLJ* the West exemplifies the ambivalences of modernity and is constructed in opposition to the homeland. As the homeland India becomes an unstable signifier of tradition as well as of the consummation of erotic desire. At first glance India seems to be part of a semiotic chain linking territoriality with tradition, a tradition rooted, as it were, in the soil of the Punjab. The homeland is represented by Baldev's village, which symbolizes the continuity of family and community. At the same time that it is troped as the motherland, India is also eroticized. The title scenes, which form the prologue, enact a diasporic longing that is overtly erotic. We see young women dancing in the fields, singing a song in which the homeland (literally embodied as female) beckons the traveler (*pardesi*) back.¹⁴ The lush fertility of the land forms a constant backdrop for the last two-thirds of the film. This is where Raj and Simran's romance is tested; this is where their love blossoms; India is the place to which NRIs must return to consummate their desires within the confines of marriage.¹⁵

In *DDLJ* the West is a site of rampant sexuality and promiscuity; the relationship of NRIs to India is mediated through anxieties about female (hetero)sexual purity. Thus, *DDLJ* constructs a discourse of female sexuality that is shot through with ambivalence. At the same time that female sexuality is semiotically linked with the fertility of the motherland, it is also configured in the virginal purity of the heroine, a purity that is inherently precarious and always at risk in the West. The film stresses that even though Simran is an NRI, she neither drinks nor smokes, she respects and obeys her father (in fact, she is terrified of him), and she submits to him at every step. Simran thus contrasts with the heroine of *Purab aur Paschim*,

Preeti, who smokes, drinks, does not respect her father, and wears a blond wig. Simran, on the other hand, is the embodiment of filial loyalty and duty and of virginal sexuality. Thus, despite the fact that she is an NRI, tradition and authenticity get mapped onto her. Simran is not the only NRI who manages to preserve cultural authenticity. Raj, our hero, is even more exemplary in his allegiance to Indian tradition (the contrast between Raj and *Purab aur Paschim*'s OP, the overseas Indian who is morally corrupt and lascivious and who, toward the end of the film, attempts the ultimate sacrilege of patricide, is telling). Significantly, *DDLJ*'s native son-of-the-soil, Simran's fiancé, is clearly undeserving of her; he is the one who drinks and smokes excessively. At the end of the film the man who gets the girl is not the son-of-the-soil but, instead, the NRI male, Raj.

Evidently, in *DDLJ*, the West is a place where cultural purity and authenticity *can* be maintained; even though the purity of NRI women is always at risk, NRI men can be counted on to ensure the maintenance of Indian tradition through the surveillance of women's sexuality.

Culture and the Sexual Purity of Indian Women

Elsewhere I have argued that postcolonial constructions of Indian Womanhood reveal the inextricability of discourses of nation with those of gender.¹⁶ Similar studies have shown the significance of discourses of sexuality to the construction of nationhood.¹⁷ But how do the already-fraught configurations of gender, sexuality, and nation become further complicated in the relationships between diasporic subjects and their homelands?¹⁸ As Gayatri Gopinath points out, heteronormative sexuality is crucial to the formation of hegemonic diasporic subjectivity.¹⁹ Gopinath argues that women's bodies are "crucial to nationalist discourse in that they serve not only as the site of biological reproduction of national collectivities, but as the very embodiment of this nostalgically evoked communal past and tradition."²⁰ Thus, because of the significance attached to the maintenance and reproduction of national culture in diaspora, heteronormative sexuality becomes especially salient to the construction of hegemonic diasporic subjectivity.

If, according to *DDLJ*, the relationship of middle-class diasporic Indians to the Indian nation is mediated through their anxieties about women's sex-

uality, the locus of these anxieties is the West, and moral pollution is emblemized in the figure of the Westernized NRI woman. The Indian nation, on the other hand, is where Indian women's sexual purity may be preserved. Indeed, the sexual purity of Indian women becomes iconic of the purity of national culture. In this manner, essentialist conceptions of nation and Indian culture converge with discourses of gender and female sexuality.

As noted above, the West is a place where the virginity of Indian women is under constant threat. The guardians of the heroine's sexual purity and, therefore, her cultural purity are NRI males. The authentic Indianness of *DDLJ*'s NRI hero is manifest in his respect for Indian codes of modesty and in his reverence for the sexual purity of Indian women. In *Purab aur Paschim*, when a drunk Preeti is assaulted by the Westernized overseas Indian OP in that ultimate site of Western promiscuity, the nightclub, it is the hero Bharat (the Indian who refuses to become an expatriate) who saves her. After Bharat has fought OP and prevented him from raping Preeti, he drapes his jacket over her bare body and, his gaze respectfully averted, brings her back to her father's home.

Similarly, in the first part of *DDLJ* when Simran and Raj are traipsing around Europe, Simran gets tipsy one night. She awakes the next morning to find that she might have shared a room, and possibly a bed, with Raj. Fearing the worst, that is, that she and Raj may have slept together the previous night, she bursts into tears. She is pacified only when Raj assures her that, even though he lives in England, he is, after all, an Indian man. He knows the value of an Indian woman's honor, or *izzat*, and would never take advantage of her. Despite the fact that he is an NRI, he knows all too well the importance of the sexual purity of Indian women. In this manner his respect for Indian women's sexual purity becomes the most crucial marker of his authenticity, his fundamental Indianness.

Through a significant discursive maneuver, NRI women are denied a capacity to manage their sexuality or protect their own honor.²¹ In both *Purab aur Paschim* and *DDLJ*, the heroines get drunk and are unable to protect themselves, and it is this lack of self-control that makes them vulnerable. In each case it falls to the men in their lives to protect them. In *Purab aur Paschim* it is Bharat, the unequivocally nationalist Indian man, who protects the honor and purity of the NRI woman. In *DDLJ* it falls to

the nonresident-but-still-quintessentially Indian Raj and, eventually, to Simran's father, Baldev, to protect and thereby control the sexuality of "their" women. Further, the sexual purity of NRI women is necessarily conceived in terms of normative heterosexuality. The moral economy of the film does not permit the expression of nonheterosexual desire.²²

Tradition and Location

As noted above, in *DDLJ* tradition (conflated, in turn, with national culture) is symbolized by the mythic landscape of the homeland, Punjab. We see the resolutely Hindu Punjab of state-sponsored Indian nationalism; significantly, all traces of Sikhism and Islam are erased from this mythic representation. Punjab is thus subsumed by hegemonic Indian nationalism. Toloyan has pointed out that in the territory of the nation-state, "differences are assimilated, destroyed, or assigned to ghettos, to enclaves demarcated by boundaries so sharp that they enable the nation to acknowledge the apparently singular and clearly fenced-off differences *within* itself, while simultaneously reaffirming the privileged homogeneity of the rest."²³ *DDLJ*'s depiction of Punjab/India illustrates the ways in which dominant recuperations of the homeland can sometimes erase all signs of Others within the nation.

Not surprisingly, what we see is not the war-torn landscape of Punjab but a nostalgic rendering of the (Hindu-Indian) homeland through images of verdant fields, the love of extended kin groups, and bonds of community. In this slippage between Punjab and India, the homeland is depicted as a site for the consolidation of family and the forging of marriage alliances. Despite the anxiety underlying Simran's marriage preparations (what if Raj is unable to rescue her?), music, dancing, feasting, and most importantly, traditional ties and customs predominate in the film's portrayal of the homeland.

As feminists and other critics of nationalism have pointed out, discourses of tradition are never gender neutral. In his work on nineteenth-century Bengal, Partha Chatterjee points out that Indian tradition was located in the home. The home, which was signified as the space of the feminine, was constructed in opposition to the masculine world. Chatterjee claims that for early nationalists in Bengal, "the world is a treacherous terrain of the pur-

suit of material interests, where practical considerations reign supreme. It is also typically the domain of the male. The home in its essence must remain unaffected by the profane activities of the material world—and woman is its representation.”²⁴

For these nineteenth-century ideologues, the home represented the spiritual core, if not the “original site,”²⁵ of Indian nationalism. While it is beyond the scope of this article to debate the usefulness of the binary of the home and the world for analyses of postcolonial nationalism, the notion that tradition represents the original site of Indian nationalism certainly resonates with *DDLJ*’s attempts to cast Indian tradition in terms of Indian Womanhood and, by discursive extension, the Indian home/land.

As noted above, in *DDLJ* tradition is configured in the heroine as virginal subject. By implication, tradition is mapped onto the bodies of unmarried daughters, who consequently have to be policed by patriarchs. Although *DDLJ*’s narrative strives to establish that Simran’s father, Baldev, is acting out of love for his daughter, for the most part he is represented as rigid, controlling, and insensitive not just to the feelings of his daughter, but also of his wife. Indeed, at one point Simran’s mother begs her to elope with Raj because, she claims, she does not want her to follow in her footsteps and sacrifice her happiness. Significantly, Raj is steadfast in his loyalty to the law of the father. Despite Simran’s mother’s repeated pleas that he elope with Simran, he insists he will wait until he can marry her “the proper way.” Evidently the fact that Simran’s mother has consented to their marriage is irrelevant to Raj; only when Baldev consents can the marriage acquire legitimacy and be deemed honorable. Simran’s mother is portrayed as a strong woman; Simran often turns to her for comfort and companionship. But in the end, it is always the father who imposes his will on the family.

Baldev, who exercises strict surveillance over the sexuality of his daughter, contrasts with Raj’s father, who is very supportive of the young lovers. In terms of the plot, however, Raj’s father does not have much agency; it is the traditional father, Baldev, who occupies narrative space. Indeed, the movement of the film is fueled, as it were, by Raj’s efforts to win over his future father-in-law. While Raj’s own father gives his consent to Raj and Simran’s union quite early in the film, narrative resolution occurs only when Simran’s father relents and gives his blessing.

It is crucial to note that in *DDLJ* Indian tradition is *not* represented as static or unchanging but, instead, is depicted as flexible and portable. As illustrated through the discourses of Raj and his father, Indian tradition can (and must) adapt to the transnational movements of migrants and capital. When Raj's father arrives in Punjab, he holds forth on his conception of Indian tradition. In a crucial conversation between the two fathers, Baldev tells Raj's father that he is pleased to meet him because, despite his Westernized appearance, he "keeps India close to his heart." Raj's father responds that he keeps India *in* his heart wherever he goes. Indeed, this reconceptualization of Indian tradition lies at the core of the film, and this is where it contrasts most sharply with earlier films such as *Purab aur Paschim*. *Purab aur Paschim* constructs a much more homogeneous and rigid definition of Indian tradition, according to which overseas Indians automatically endanger their cultural purity by living in the West. In *DDLJ*, on the other hand, Indian tradition is represented as responsive to the demands of flows of migration and late capitalism.

The contrasting constructions of Indian tradition in *Purab aur Paschim* and *DDLJ* index how notions of nationhood and belonging have shifted. Unlike earlier films about diasporic Indians, *DDLJ* asserts that Indian tradition can be preserved in the West and, in so doing, interrogates the relationship between territoriality, culture, and identity. The sexual purity of unmarried daughters is a crucial site for the preservation of Indian tradition; while it is always at risk in the West, it can be protected, and family and national honor can be preserved—through the constant surveillance and assiduous self-control exercised by NRI males. More significantly, as articulated in the discourses of Raj and his father, one can belong, one can stay authentically Indian, even when one no longer lives in India.

The mid-1990s saw a proliferation of films that were not just set abroad but, more importantly, depicted the lives and dilemmas of diasporic Indians. The NRIs featured in these films were frequently upper- or middle-class and reflect the increasing mobility of the professional classes in India. Furthermore, several of them were about the younger generation of diasporic Indians, who may or may not return to the homeland in the fashion of

Bharat of *Purab aur Paschim* but who strive to preserve Indian values in the manner in which they lead their lives. Why have Hindi films of the mid-1990s been so preoccupied with NRIs? How can we understand the historical and political contexts in which cinematic representations of the nation's not-quite-Others are embedded?

In analyzing the diegesis of popular films like *DDLJ*, my objective is to trace how ideologies of nation, gender, and territoriality structure its narrative. I will now relate shifts in constructions of Indian tradition, belonging, and identity in *DDLJ* to intertextual contexts marked by changing perceptions of NRIs. It should be clear that I am, by no means, arguing for simplistically mapping the constitution of identity onto political economy; nor am I suggesting that we attribute changes in notions of belonging solely to recent developments in the Indian economy. Nevertheless, I believe that representations of NRIs in contemporary India need to be located in the post-liberalization conjuncture. In this section, therefore, I trace the ways in which NRIs have been positioned by the policies and discursive practices of liberalization. I am particularly interested in how representations of NRIs in state and elite discourses implicate ideologies of class and gender.

From the mid-1980s onward the Indian government inaugurated policies that aimed at opening up the economy to privatization and multinational investment. It streamlined its procedures in order to make it easier for companies to get clearance for projects. For instance, in early 1987 the number of approvals required from the Reserve Bank of India (the Indian equivalent of the U.S. Federal Reserve) was reduced from fourteen to four. Liberalization policies launched by the government of India in the mid-1980s had immediate effects. For example, after the entry of foreign banks and the deregulation of banking in 1985, in a single year, profits for foreign banks doubled to Rs. 61.7 crore.²⁶ Foreign investments accelerated at an unprecedented rate. In the first nine months of 1988, overseas investment peaked at Rs. 170 crore.²⁷ The government introduced several policy changes, such as changing Reserve Bank regulations to make it easier for multinationals to employ foreign nationals in India, permitting overseas organizations to establish joint ventures without Indian partners. An increasing number of multinationals began to recognize the importance of gaining a foothold in

India, both for its potentially huge domestic market and as a springboard to markets in the rest of the region.

To a large extent the government acted with the approval (if not in response to the prodding) of upper-class and middle-class elites. For instance, an editorial in the metropolitan newsmagazine *India Today* hailed then–prime minister Rajiv Gandhi, who had been credited with introducing economic reforms, as “the original glasnostian.” The editorial proceeded to explicitly conflate “modernism” with privatization and liberalization: “In the context of India’s development modernism must mean . . . decreasing the role of the state and getting the Government off the backs of the people. Modernism must mean freeing the productive and creative energies of the people—a genius they have demonstrated whenever hampering government controls are lifted.”²⁸

By 1990 more changes had been introduced. Despite the trepidations of multinationals, the left-leaning National Front regime then in power continued to “reform” the Indian economy. In 1991 India’s external debt amounted to \$70 billion and was the third largest in the world after Brazil’s (\$122 billion) and Mexico’s (\$101 billion).²⁹ The Indian government had to seek a substantial structural adjustment loan of \$5–7 billion from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to withstand the serious financial crisis. Conditions for the loan included devaluing the currency, liberalizing the foreign trade sector, cutting subsidies, and initiating the privatization of industry.³⁰

The year 1991 has been deemed crucial because of the economic reforms introduced by the government in response to the conditions attached to the structural adjustment loans borrowed from the IMF. The government did away with licensing for all except eighteen industries.³¹ It also reduced the number of procedures required for multinational investment. For example, multinationals were now permitted to invest up to 40 percent equity in Indian companies (provided imported capital goods did not exceed 30 percent of the total value of outlay).³² By 1995 the private sector was permitted to pursue oil and gas exploration, the lending rates of banks were deregulated, airlines were privatized, and in some sectors, industrial licensing was almost completely deregulated. In 1996 some economists were advocating the emulation of China’s economic reforms. They claimed that in China,

the nonstate sector was virtually free of “most regulatory impediments—it pays few taxes and is free to hire and fire labor, and has no restrictions on foreign investment.”³³

The consequences of liberalization for organized and unorganized labor are worthy of a separate investigation. Other commentators were concerned that liberalization would plunge India into “neo-colonial dependency.” For instance, one analyst remarked that “the nexus between direct foreign investment and promotion of consumerism among upper and middle classes is . . . palpable from the behaviour of multinational corporations already operating in India.”³⁴

Despite these changes in the government’s economic policies, many supporters of liberalization—both within the state and in industry—were dissatisfied with the pace of the reforms. Skeptical of the government’s commitment to completely liberalize the Indian economy, they turned to a different kind of foreign investor, the NRI. The NRIs targeted this time were not multimillionaires such as the U.K.-based tycoon Swaraj Paul, but upper-class and upper middle-class Indians all over the diaspora. It was believed that the remittances and deposits of NRIs would enable India to survive the serious foreign exchange crisis.³⁵ Indeed, in his budget speech the finance minister tried to court NRIs by announcing the appointment of a chief commissioner whose primary responsibility would be to attract NRI investment.³⁶ Comparisons were made between Israel’s drive for funds from Jewish communities overseas and India’s appeals for “inward remittances.” The government offered a range of incentives, such as a higher rate of interest on the Foreign Currency (nonresident) Deposit Scheme (FCNR). In fact, the interest rate for FCNRs was often much higher than the London Inter-Bank Offered Rate at which international banks lend to one another.

Obviously, only wealthy NRIs with the capital to invest in India were being wooed. Political and economic refugees, migrant laborers, and exiles were completely erased from these representations. The newly discovered, wealthy NRI became the new messiah of liberalization. By 1991 the government had launched an increasing number of schemes as incentives to draw NRI investment. Ranging from the sale of gold to raise foreign exchange to the devaluation of the rupee, these schemes were designed to

encourage NRIs to remit money to India through regular banking channels, and in fact, they led to an increase in the total number of NRI deposits. Under the 1991–1992 budget, the following special incentives were offered to NRIs to invest in India: a tax exemption on interest earned on Non-Residential External accounts held by persons characterized as residents under the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA), remittances in foreign exchange to persons in India, India Development Bonds, Double Taxation Agreements, and NRI Bonds.³⁷ Relaxations under FERA and income tax laws would enable NRIs to stay up to 150 days in a financial year and still retain their NRI status under income tax rules; further, under FERA, NRIs with foreign citizenship could work in India up to three years without having to repatriate their foreign assets to India.

NRIs emerged as an important source of foreign investment, and India was packaged as an attractive investment opportunity. A special advertising supplement aimed at NRIs in North America claimed, “Over the last few months, were it not for the . . . NRI deposits that continued with banks in India, India would have defaulted on its foreign repayments. . . . Most NRIs showed their confidence in India by retaining their hard earned foreign exchange in banks in India.”³⁸ In 1992 the net inflow of funds into NRI deposits was estimated at \$4.35 billion.³⁹ The relationship of NRIs to India was defined largely in financial terms. As noted above, the NRIs being valorized were those who had the wealth to invest in India. In addition to being classed in this manner, the NRIs being courted for their capital were gendered as male. The following description is informative not only because it expresses the love-hate tone of popular representations of NRIs, but also because it is emblematic of the masculine subjectivity imparted to them.⁴⁰

He is the Indian everyone loves to hate: flashily dressed, he drinks bottled water, books airline seats en bloc during the holiday season, complains bitterly about “Indian efficiency,” and walks away with prime allotments of land, blue chip stocks and Maruti 1000s. He is the Non-Resident Indian (NRI). But many Indians prefer to call him Not Required Indian. Yet, it seems it is he who might turn out to be the *knight in shining armour* to rescue the *damsel in distress* that is the Indian economy with its many

woes: 12 per cent inflation, foreign exchange reserves of Rs. 3,050 crore (three weeks' imports); Gulf crisis bill of Rs. 71,000 crore; budget deficit of Rs. 13,000 crore, and industrial growth target downgraded from 10 percent to 7.5 per cent.⁴¹

Since complete liberalization was deemed out of reach by most elites, the (wealthy, male) NRI, the foreign-returned-son-of-the-soil, emerged as the harbinger of privatization and increased foreign investment.

Representations of the NRI in these elite discourses—as male, affluent, and peripatetic—enable us to trace some of the ways in which symbolic and political landscapes were altered through the intersection of discourses of class, gender, and sexuality with axes of political economy. These changes seem to resonate with *DDLJ*'s representation of shifting notions of belonging and Indian tradition, and enact discontinuous moments in the trajectory of postcolonial nationalism. They suggest how postcoloniality is mediated by late capitalism so as to complicate processes of decolonization. Stuart Hall points out that the term *postcolonial* may help us “identify what are the new relations and dispositions of power which are emerging in the new conjuncture.”⁴² *DDLJ*'s constructions of NRIs, with its attendant discourses of nation and identity, point to some of the new “dispositions of power” currently emerging in post-liberalization India.

In part, the preoccupation with NRIs in recent Hindi films such as *DDLJ* is the result of the fact that the diaspora represents a crucial segment of their market. According to media critics Madhu Jain and Nandita Chowdhury, Hindi film producers, who had always been aware of overseas markets for their films, have now become even more cognizant of the tremendous appeal of these films among diasporic communities. Jain and Chowdhury point out that these “filmmakers are cashing in on the growing nostalgia for the homeland” not just because it is a “strain of pop patriotism,” but because it is sound economic sense.⁴³ They claim that film music sales constitute about 10 to 15 percent of total sales. But films like *DDLJ* also perform the ideological work of representing the diaspora to itself and to “those back home.” *DDLJ*, in particular, appears to have paved the way for countless films (such as *Pardes* [Foreign land] and *Pyar to Hona hi Tha* [Love was inevitable]) that have focused on the longings and anxieties of diasporic

Indians. These films have played on the dilemmas of many Indians who may have made it abroad but who are concerned about losing their culture. In keeping with the reconceptualization of notions of culture, belonging, and Indianness currently occurring in India, these films are about NRIs who may or may not return to India but are "reassured and reassuring about traditional [Indian] values."⁴⁴

I have tried to relate the discursive chains of nationhood, gender, and territoriality constructed by films like *DDLJ* to the historically specific political and economic contexts of which they are a part. While political and economic developments do not overdetermine the meanings of cultural texts, they participate in the conditions of possibility for the creation, circulation, and reception of these texts. In thus contextualizing the changing relationships of NRIs to the homeland, I have been particularly interested in examining how elite and official discourses of NRIs are gendered and classed in particular ways.

While this article does not analyze the specific experiences of diasporic women (who, as subjects-in-history, are heterogeneously located vis-à-vis states, class structures, and disciplinary technologies of gender and sexuality), these women are more than just sites for contests over Indian tradition and culture.⁴⁵ One of my goals in focusing on the reconfiguration of location and identity occurring in postliberalization India has been to outline the centrality of discourses of gender and sexuality to relationships between diasporas and homelands.

Next I will revisit the themes of *DDLJ* in order to reflect on the relationship between travel and culture and between gender and diaspora, on the mobility of transnational capital in the postcolonial conjuncture, and on the implications of transnationalism for the fate of the nation. The subjectivities of NRIs and other diasporic peoples may be said to have been formed through specific modes of travel and dwelling. In this context, it is important to note that travel is shaped by inequities along lines of race, gender, and class. Not all forms of travel are privileged; some are the result of coercion and violence, and many occur within "highly determined circuits."⁴⁶ James Clifford defines travel as a "range of material, spatial practices that

produce knowledges, stories, traditions, comportments, musics, books, diaries, and other cultural expressions.”⁴⁷ Diasporic subjects, however, do not just travel. They also forge identities and communities shaped by particular forms of longing and dwelling. What implications do diasporic forms of travel and dwelling have for how we may conceptualize subjectivity and culture? If travels and contacts are “crucial sites for an unfinished modernity,” then diasporas are “part of an ongoing transnational network that includes the homeland not as something simply left behind but as a place of attachment in a contrapuntal modernity.”⁴⁸ What spaces for political agency and intervention are created through diasporic practices of travel and dwelling? What identities, attachments, notions of belonging, and conceptions of culture travel with diasporic peoples, and what gets left behind in processes of dwelling in new lands?

Hindi films have always played an important role in enabling the imagining of diasporas and homelands. They forge relationships of diasporic Indians with imaginary homelands; in addition, these films do the cultural work of firing the imagination of viewers in India about the diaspora. *DDLJ* provides a view of how, in popular representations, Indian culture is created through practices of travel, contact, and diasporic longing. Equally importantly, it shows how those in the homeland represent the cultures of diaspora. At first glance, it appears as if *DDLJ* creates a discourse of a timeless Indian culture, moreover, a culture rooted in the Punjabi-Indian soil. But in contrast to earlier films about diasporic Indians (such as *Purab aur Paschim*), *DDLJ* suggests that Indian culture *can* travel in the hearts of diasporic subjects. As observed in the policing of Simran’s sexuality, Indian culture can be kept alive through specifically gendered practices of “dwelling-in-displacement.”⁴⁹ Indian women abroad mark their essential difference from Western women by being dutiful daughters and faithful wives. Similarly, as claimed by Raj when he reassures Simran that he did not seduce her and, later, when he refuses to elope with her, Indian men are different from Western men because of their allegiance to Indian codes of sexuality, gender, and family. In these representations Western men and, in particular, Western women are portrayed as the Others from whom Indian culture must be protected and against whom Indian manhood and womanhood must be defined.

But by straddling the borders of Self and Other, the gendered NRI represents a space of ambivalence in nationalist discourses of alterity. As pointed out by Tololyan, "Diasporas are emblems of transnationalism because they embody the question of borders, which is at the heart of any adequate definition of the Others of the nation-state."⁵⁰ I would add that the Others of the nation-state exist not just within but also beyond its borders. The integrity of the nation-state is predicated on its management of alterity—both within and outside. In *DDLJ* the figure of the NRI, the Indian abroad, interrogates binaries between the national and the foreign, Self and not-quite-Other.

Clearly, what it means to be an Indian abroad varies according to one's immigration history,⁵¹ position vis-à-vis the host state, relationship with other communities, gender, class position, and so on. The temporal and geographical specificity of diaspora experiences are thus crucial to an understanding of the relationship between travel, dwelling, and culture. *DDLJ*, however, does not attend to the specificity of diasporic circuits of travel. The film is about a diasporic family in Britain, but apart from showing us a few landmarks of London, there is nothing that portrays the locale negotiated by members of this family. *DDLJ* is about a generalized diasporic family that could be living anywhere. In stark contrast to *Bhaji on the Beach*, Gurinder Chadha's film about Indian women in England, or Mira Nair's *Mississippi Masala*, about twice-displaced immigrants to the United States, *DDLJ* teaches us nothing about the history of Indians in Britain, their social relations with other diasporic communities, or their struggles with structures of race or class in their host country.

While many theorists represent diasporic experiences as unmarked by gender, thereby normalizing and privileging male experiences, I argue that gender is central to the formation of diasporic identities.⁵² In *DDLJ*, if diasporic women are especially burdened with the transmittal of Indian culture, NRI men anthropomorphize the mobility of culture. The film enacts a desire for a particular type of masculinity that is affluent, cosmopolitan, and modern. Bharat in *Purab aur Paschim* wants to engage in the quintessentially modernist project of bringing together the knowledge (*gyan*) of the East and the science (*vigyan*) of the West. In contrast, our hero in *DDLJ* asserts that he has returned to the homeland to launch a factory. Even though his primary

motive is to stake his claim on Simran and marry her, it is this assertion that provides him with a legitimate entry into Simran's family. Wealthy, male NRIs thus symbolize the mobility of capital. *DDLJ* is not just about the (im)portability of capital but, additionally, about the (im)portability of certain types of gender identities. In an age of liberalization, modernity is mediated through the gendered figure of the NRI. The female NRI's sexual purity confirms her cultural purity; the male NRI's respect for Indian women and Indian families is symbolic of his authentic Indianness.

DDLJ raises interesting questions about the agency of diasporic Indian women.⁵³ At first glance the women in the film appear as mere pawns in masculinist battles over culture and tradition. Simran is terrified of her father and seems to obey him unquestioningly. Simran's mother seems unable to stand up to the tyranny of her husband. Unlike other popular narratives about women in diaspora where women's travel to the West signifies eventual self-realization and emancipation (for instance, *Jasmine* and *The Joy Luck Club*), the women in *DDLJ* seem equally imprisoned at home and abroad.

On closer analysis, however, the women in *DDLJ* have a slightly more complex subjectivity. Significantly, Simran travels to Switzerland, where she meets Raj. Indeed, Simran's father resists permitting her to go to Switzerland because he seems all too aware of the subversions represented by women (especially single women) who travel for pleasure. Simran has to work hard to obtain his permission to travel. As noted above, she persuades him by waking up early and singing a Hindu hymn within her father's earshot. Her father is very pleased when he hears her pray. He turns to his wife and says, "I know now that I haven't failed. I have managed to keep India alive in the heart of London." In another scene Simran and her younger sister are dancing to Western music. As soon as Simran hears their father approaching their house, she changes the music to an old Hindi song. She knows that the song will evoke for him nostalgic memories of India and, hence, will put him in a good mood.⁵⁴ Even though, in the ultimate analysis, the law of the father prevails, Simran's (limited) ability to manipulate tokens of duty and tradition to soften his mood so she can travel to Europe to get away for a short while suggests how diasporic women might negotiate dominant discourses of tradition and family.

Similarly, when she encourages her daughter to elope with Raj, Simran's mother reveals her love for her daughter, her courage, and her insights into gender inequities within the family. When Simran confides in her mother about her love for Raj, her mother replies that after sacrificing her own happiness all her life, she had promised herself that she would not permit the same thing to happen to her daughter. But, she laments, she was mistaken. She had forgotten that "a woman does not even have a right to make promises. She will always be sacrificed for the happiness of a man." She begs Simran to forget Raj. Yet later, when she meets Raj and sees how much Simran and Raj love each other, she changes her mind. She takes her jewelry to them and begs them to run away. In so doing she is willing to defy her husband and his code of family honor and is prepared to assume responsibility and face the consequences of encouraging Simran and Raj to elope. Finally, in the last scene when Raj is being beaten up by Simran's fiancé and his friends at the railway station, it is her mother who holds her hand and takes her to him (significantly, however, Simran is prevented from going to him by her father, who is also at the station). Similarly, Simran's younger sister, who is portrayed as precocious and intelligent, has a mind of her own and has no qualms about expressing her opinions. She is particularly candid about pointing to the flaws of Simran's fiancé and, through her disapproval of him, sets him up as a foil to the NRI hero Raj.

Although it is never fully developed through the diegesis of the film, the subversive potential of Simran's sexuality is introduced early. The *mise-en-scène* illustrates both the spectatorial positions created through visual pleasure and the manner in which pleasure is yoked to the construction of specific discourses of female sexuality. We see Simran dancing in the rain. In the semiotic codes of Hindi film (and many other Indian textual traditions), rain signifies eroticism and (an often transgressive) sensuality. In one frame we see her swaying rhythmically, her legs apart, her eyes closed, as the rain pours down on her. She is wearing a short dress; the camera lingers on her body. Her voluptuous body is made the object of our gaze throughout the first half of the film. The second half of the film is set in India, and even though we see Simran wearing traditional (and, therefore, seemingly demure) clothes, we are constantly reminded of her exuberant sexuality. In a crucial scene portraying the festivities of the night before Simran's wed-

ding to the man chosen by her father, we see her dancing joyfully. Simran and Raj, who is still pretending to be a friend of her fiancé, lead groups of young women and men, respectively. They sing a song that expresses their longing for each other and anticipates the consummation of their desire. Simran is to wed her fiancé the next day, but she is confident that Raj will prevent the marriage from taking place and that the two of them will be united at last. The scene is redolent with sexual yearning and the anticipation of their union. Throughout the film Simran's youthful sexuality exists as a powerful undercurrent, a potentially subversive force that threatens to break free from her father's surveillance and tear asunder the India that he so carefully preserves in his home. These images not only create forms of visual pleasure for the (implied) viewer but also perform the ideological work of reminding us of the dangers of female sexuality. At the same time, this ambivalence toward female sexuality is shaped by discourses of heteronormativity, so that anxieties about female sexuality are resolved by regulating it within the confines of (parent-approved) marriage.

Given that travel is shaped by hierarchies of gender, race, and class, and in light of its unpredictable consequences for those who undertake it, it seems particularly problematic to conceive of it in voluntaristic terms. In the era of late capitalism, the mobility of peoples and ideas is organized within specific regimes of capital and labor. The coercion and violence that might compel certain forms of travel are particularly pertinent in the present post-Fordist regime of flexible accumulation marked by low wages and nonunionized labor.⁵⁵ To revisit *DDLJ*'s representation of the conjunction between mobility and transnational capital, the figure of Raj anthropomorphizes the mobility of transnational capital; with his knapsack on his back, he is always ready to travel. But at the same time, he is depicted as essentially Indian in his respect for the sexual purity of Indian women, his deference to his elders, and his reverence for bonds of marriage, family, and community. Raj thus epitomizes contemporary valorizations of the NRI who is an Indian at heart and who is youthful, virile, masculine; he is very much the archetypal NRI, a "knight in shining armour" who will rescue the "damsel in distress." The NRI is the prodigal come home to participate (if not enable) the liberalization of India, claimed as authentically Indian, indigenized. He is not just male but, most importantly, is wealthy, thus bely-

ing the struggles of countless working-class men and women of Indian origin who live and work in immiserated conditions all over the world.

As pointed out by Aihwa Ong, "Being postcolonial means not only challenging different forms of colonial domination in the home country and abroad but also radical questioning of certainties tied to culture, race, and nation."⁵⁶ What can the discourses of nation and identity in *DDLJ* teach us about postcoloniality in a transnational, late capitalist conjuncture? Through my analysis of representations of the relationship between colonial metropole and post-colony in films such as *DDLJ*, I have tried to explore the spaces occupied by the West in identities constructed at the intersection of gender, sexuality, and nation. In a context marked by liberalization and intensified transnational flows of migrants and of capital, *DDLJ*'s representations of the homeland signal the reconstitution of postcolonial Indian nationalism. I have thus aimed to examine the construction of national(ist) subjectivity and transnational desire through the prism of postcoloniality. Hall argues that theories of postcoloniality are valuable because they enable an interrogation of the binaries between "here and there."⁵⁷ To my mind, theories of postcoloniality also problematize the binary between colonization and decolonization, between "then and now," by attending to the reconfiguration of relations of inequality. I have tried to engage the changing modalities of postcoloniality in conditions of late capitalism.

In a 1992 critique Arif Dirlik alleged that postcolonial theory is not sufficiently concerned with the world "outside the subject." He complained that it is too preoccupied with questions of identity and culture and is insufficiently attentive to politics and political economy.⁵⁸ In locating shifting constructions of diaspora and homeland in the post-liberalization conjuncture, however, I have tried to problematize binaries of identity versus economics by foregrounding the inextricability of culture and political economy. Further, I have tried to demonstrate that postcolonial theory does not, as alleged by Dirlik, serve the cultural requirements of global capitalism but, in fact, can enable us to interrogate the cultural constitution of late capitalism.

Hall insists that "diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing themselves anew through transformation and *difference*."⁵⁹ *DDLJ* illustrates a shift in the composition and conceptualization of Indian dias-

poras. Formerly, as with earlier cohorts of migrant laborers in Britain, the Caribbean, or California, to go abroad was to stay abroad. In earlier representations of overseas Indians, for example in *Purab aur Paschim*, the only way to be abroad was necessarily to be inauthentic. Diasporic Indians had to surrender their culture; they had to choose between East and West, between *purab* and *paschim*. Leaving home meant being cut off from home; as a consequence, identity and location were closely tied. *DDLJ* suggests that the relationship between cultures and spaces has changed.⁶⁰ While earlier, decisions to live abroad were monumental because they were deemed irreversible, the present context of late capitalism has seen an increase in the movements of NRIs between diaspora and homeland. *DDLJ* suggests that it is possible to get the best of both the East and the West; diasporic Indians can live abroad and still be authentically Indian. In *Purab aur Paschim*, to leave the country was to disown the nation. The foreign represented a space where the sexual purity of women could not be preserved; only in India could the law of the father be maintained. *DDLJ* suggests that one's cultural identity does not depend on where one lives. In this manner the film represents fundamental changes in the experience and imagination of foreign places and the renegotiation of the relationship between mobility, location, and authenticity.⁶¹

There has been much discussion about postnationalism in recent debates about transnationalism. What are the implications of the intensified movements of peoples, ideas, and capital and the rearticulation of relationships between space, place, and culture for understandings of nationhood and belonging?⁶² While the territorial form of the nation-state might well be in crisis, we are also witnessing the continuing hegemony of the national.⁶³

Indeed, diasporas and nationalisms might re-create each other. As Arjun Appadurai points out, "One major fact that accounts for strains in the union of nation and state is that the nationalist genie, never perfectly contained in the bottle of the territorial state, is now itself diasporic."⁶⁴ In the beginning of the film we see Baldev longing for his *vatan* (homeland), his Punjab. As the film progresses we see that, far from being a postnational longing for the land of his past, Baldev's nostalgia for the Punjab and Punjabi culture is equated with the nation and national culture. His allegiance

to Punjab is equated with his identity as an Indian, a Hindustani. In this manner the love of the homeland is subsumed by nationalism.

But how, in the present conjuncture, are we to distinguish between the love of the homeland and nationalism? In his utopian quest for postnational forms of politics, Arjun Appadurai wonders if it “may be time to rethink monopatriotism, patriotism directed exclusively to the hyphen between nation and state, and to allow the material problems we face—the deficit, the environment, abortion, race, drugs, and jobs—to define those social groups and ideas for which we would be willing to live, and die.”⁶⁵ In *DDLJ*, patriotism and nationalism are conflated. The film is about nonresident Indians, not nonresident Punjabis, who are being reclaimed as prodigal sons by the contemporary Indian nation-state. The film represents NRIs as essentially loyal to the nation and to national culture. Thus, even though the film lovingly portrays Punjabi customs, it is not about Punjabi culture but about Indian culture. In the final analysis the film is about Indian manhood and Indian womanhood and about carrying India in our hearts wherever we go.

In her recent work Marilyn Ivy speaks of the “widespread recognition in Japan today that destabilizations of capitalist modernity have decreed the loss of much of the past, a past sometimes troped as ‘traditional.’”⁶⁶ In postcolonial India, on the other hand, tradition and national culture do not appear as “discourses of the vanishing”⁶⁷ in quite the same way as they seem to in Japan but are, instead, being *re-created* in conjunction with liberalization and late capitalism. The Indian government’s invitation to wealthy NRIs to invest in India has compelled a renegotiation of notions of belonging and nationhood. While earlier the Indian who lived abroad was described primarily in terms of betrayal, abdication of responsibility to the motherland, and “brain drain,” in postliberalization India NRIs with capital to invest are hailed as saviors of the nation’s economy. *DDLJ* demonstrates that mobility does not entail a disavowal of Indianness; instead it involves (if not compels) a redefinition of belonging and loyalty to the homeland. *DDLJ* illustrates how discourses of identity and nationhood are being reshaped in conjunction with transnational circuits of culture and desire and by the political economies of late capitalism.

Notes

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1. Here I build on feminist revisions of home as "an imaginative, politically charged space where the familiarity and sense of affection and commitment lay in shared collective analysis of social injustice, as well as a vision of radical transformation" (Chandra Mohanty, "Defining Genealogies: Feminist Reflections on Being South Asian in North America," in *Our Feet Walk the Sky: Women of the South Asian Diaspora*, ed. Women of South Asian Descent Collective [San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1994], 353). See also Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994); Caren Kaplan, "Deterritorializations: The Rewriting of Home and Exile in Western Feminist Discourse," *Cultural Critique* 6 (spring 1987): 187–198; Purnima Mankekar, "Reflections on Diasporic Identities: A Prolegomenon to an Analysis of Political Bifocalities," *Diaspora* 3, no. 3 (winter 1994): 349–371; Biddy Martin and Chandra Mohanty, "Feminist Politics: What's Home Got to Do with It?" in *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*, ed. Teresa de Lauretis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 191–212; Minnie Bruce Pratt, "Identity: Skin Blood Heart," in *Yours in Struggle: Three Feminist Perspectives on Anti-Semitism and Racism*, ed. Elly Bulkin, Minnie Bruce Pratt, and Barbara Smith (New York: Long Haul, 1984), 11–63; Adrienne Rich, *Blood, Bread, and Poetry: Selected Prose, 1979–1985* (New York: Norton, 1986).
2. I have italicized those terms whose constructed and contested nature I intend to highlight. After flagging these terms when I first introduce them, I will not italicize them in the rest of the essay.

- 3 Grewal and Kaplan, *Scattered Hegemonies*, 13.
- 4 See Michael M. J. Fischer and Mehdi Abedi, "Bombay Talkies, the Word, and the World: Salman Rushdie's Satanic Verses," *Cultural Anthropology* 5, no. 2 (May 1990): 107–159; Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* (London: Viking, 1982); Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses* (London: Viking, 1988).
- 5 See Marie Gillespie, *Television, Ethnicity, and Cultural Change* (London: Routledge, 1995) for a fascinating study of the role of video among South Asian families in Southall, U.K. Gita Srinivasan, a graduate student at the Department of Cultural and Social Anthropology at Stanford University, is currently working on a dissertation on Hindi film and Indians in Trinidad.
- 6 Ravi Vasudevan, "Film Studies, New Cultural History and Experience of Modernity," *Economic and Political Weekly* 30, no. 44 (4 November 1995): 2809–2814.
- 7 Cf. James Clifford's distinction between immigration and diaspora: immigrants are en route to assimilation; diasporic peoples, on the other hand, are those whose "sense of identity is centrally defined by collective histories of displacement and violent loss [and] cannot be 'cured' by merging into a new national community" (*Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997], 250).
- 8 Khachig Tololyan, "The Nation-State and Its Others: In Lieu of a Preface," *Diaspora* 1, no. 1 (spring 1991): 3.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 5.
- 10 Stefan Helmreich, "Kinship, Nation, and Paul Gilroy's Concept of Diaspora," *Diaspora* 2, no. 2 (fall 1992): 243–249.
- 11 Here Helmreich is relating the etymology of the term *diaspora* specifically to Judeo-Christian and Islamic cosmologies (see Carol Delaney, *The Seed and the Soil: Gender and Cosmology in Turkish Village Society* [Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1991]); I would contend, however, that representations of the seed in terms of male substance or sperm are not unique to Judeo-Christian and Islamic discourses of reproduction.
- 12 Helmreich, "Kinship, Nation, and Paul Gilroy's Concept of Diaspora," 245.
- 13 Stuart Hall, "When Was 'the Post-Colonial'? Thinking at the Limit," in *The Post-Colonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons*, ed. Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti (London: Routledge, 1996), 246.
- 14 The Hindi term *pardesi* has many meanings, all of which depend on the context in which it is used, ranging from outsider, sojourner, traveler, and so on. In this context *pardesi* refers to the overseas Indian who has left the homeland.
- 15 As I will explain shortly, in this particular rendition Punjab is conflated with and subsumed by India.
- 16 See Purnima Mankekar, "Television Tales and a Woman's Rage: A Nationalist Recasting of Draupadi's 'Disrobing,'" *Public Culture* 11 (spring 1993): 469–492; Mankekar, "National Texts and Gendered Lives: An Ethnography of Television Viewers in a North Indian City," *American Ethnologist* 20, no. 3 (August 1993): 543–563; Mankekar, *Screening Culture, View-*

- ing Politics: An Ethnography of Television, Womanhood, and Nation in Postcolonial India* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999). For feminist historiography of the relationship of discourses of gender to colonial discourse and anticolonial nationalism see Uma Chakarvarti, "Whatever Happened to the Vedic Dasi? Orientalism, Nationalism, and a Script for the Past," in *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*, ed. Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1989), 27–87, and Lata Mani, "Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India," in *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*, ed. Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1989), 88–126.
- 17 See, for instance, Andrew Parker, Mary Russo, Doris Sommer, and Patricia Yaeger, eds., *Nationalisms and Sexualities* (London: Routledge, 1992).
 - 18 I am grateful to Sherry Ortner for pushing me to clarify this point.
 - 19 Gayatri Gopinath, "Nostalgia, Desire, Diaspora: South Asian Sexualities in Motion," *positions* 5 (fall 1997): 467–489.
 - 20 *Ibid.*, 468.
 - 21 I will discuss the subversive potential of Simran's sexuality subsequently.
 - 22 Gopinath makes a similar point in her analysis of dominant discourses of nationhood within the South Asian diaspora in the United States: "A 'non-heterosexual Indian woman' occupies a space of impossibility, in that not only is she excluded from these various 'home' spaces but, quite literally, she simply cannot be imagined" (*ibid.*, 471).
 - 23 Tololyan, "Nation-State and Its Others," 6; emphasis in original.
 - 24 Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), 120.
 - 25 *Ibid.*, 147.
 - 26 "Foreign Banks: A Profitable Presence," *India Today*, 31 July 1988, 54–56. One crore = 10 million.
 - 27 "Foreign Investment: Discovering India," *India Today*, 31 December 1988, 75.
 - 28 "The Challenge of Modernism," *India Today*, 15 January 1988, 7.
 - 29 Pulin Nayak, "On the Crisis and the Remedies," *Economic and Political Weekly* 26, no. 34 (24 August 1991): 1997.
 - 30 *Ibid.*, 1993.
 - 31 D. T. Lakdawala, "New Policy Measures," *Economic and Political Weekly* 26, no. 34 (24 August 1991): 1991.
 - 32 For a detailed analysis of the reforms introduced in 1991 see Nayak, "On the Crisis and the Remedies."
 - 33 "Economic Liberalisation: Cut Short by Politics," *India Today*, 15 March 1996, 66.
 - 34 B. M., "Towards Neo-Colonial Dependency," *Economic and Political Weekly* 26, no. 31 (3 August 1991): 1837–1839. For a more sanguine view of the reforms see Shailendra Sharma, "India's Economic Liberalization: The Elephant Comes of Age," *Current History*, December 1996, 414–418.

- 35 See, for example, Lakdawala, "New Policy Measures," 1992.
- 36 "NRI Remittances: Why This Neglect," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 25, no. 33 (11 August 1991): 1885.
- 37 "Exchange Reserves: Neglected Factor," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 27, no. 1-2 (4 January 1992): 4.
- 38 "NRIs: A Relationship Worth Nurturing," *India Today*, 15 October 1991, 54.
- 39 "Exchange Reserves," 4. NRIs, with their investments in property, business, securities, and deposits, emerged as the fourth largest group of investors in India after the United States, Switzerland, and Japan; see "Investment: Widening Horizons," *India Today*, 30 June 1993, 73.
- 40 Cf. Kamala Visweswaran's observation about the implied masculinity of global capital, "Diaspora by Design: Flexible Citizenship and South Asians in U.S. Racial Formations," *Diaspora* 6, no. 1 (spring 1997): 18. See also Rosemary Marangoly George, "From Expatriate Aristocrat to Immigrant Nobody: South Asian Racial Strategies in the Southern California Context," *Diaspora* 6, no. 1 (spring 1997): 31-60.
- 41 "Non-Resident Indians: Asking for More," *India Today*, 31 December 1990, 53; my emphasis.
- 42 Hall, "When Was 'the Post-Colonial?'" 246.
- 43 Madhu Jain and Nandita Chowdhury, "Cinema: Coming Home," *India Today*, 4 August 1997, 28b-28c.
- 44 Filmmaker Govind Nihalani quoted in *ibid.*
- 45 Mani, "Contentious Traditions." An exploration of how immigrant and diasporic women actively negotiate complex ideologies of nation, gender, and sexuality as they strive to make their homes abroad is worth a separate investigation. Nevertheless, my experiences as an Indian woman abroad and as an activist have reinforced for me the tangible and profound effects of nationalist discourses of gender, family, and culture for the lives of women in the diaspora. See also Anannya Bhattacharjee, "The Habit of Ex-Nomination: Nation, Woman, and the Indian Immigrant Bourgeoisie," *Public Culture* 5, no. 1 (fall 1992): 19-44; Grewal and Kaplan, *Scattered Hegemonies*; Aihwa Ong, "Women out of China: Traveling Tales and Traveling Theories in Postcolonial Feminism," in *Women Writing Culture*, ed. Ruth Behar and Deborah Gordon (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 350-372.
- 46 Mary Louise Pratt, quoted in Clifford, *Routes*, 34-35.
- 47 Clifford, *Routes*, 35.
- 48 *Ibid.*, 2, 256.
- 49 *Ibid.*, 254.
- 50 Töbolyan, "Nation-State and Its Others," 6.
- 51 For instance, South Asian immigration to the United States has varied tremendously over the last century, resulting in markedly different, class-mediated formations of diaspora. Compare, for example, the communities of migrant agricultural laborers who settled in Cal-

- ifornia at the turn of the century with those formed by professionals and students who immigrated to India after the expansion of the professional quota in the late 1960s and the family-based immigrations of the 1990s (see *Times of India*, 28 September 1997, for details).
- 52 See also Clifford, *Routes*, 258. *DDLJ* depicts diaspora unequivocally in terms of gender and class.
- 53 It is problematic to generalize that travel, especially for women, is necessarily or unambiguously liberating or oppressive. Instead, as pointed out by Aihwa Ong, it is much more helpful to think of the stories of women who travel as “expressing a more muddled, contradictory, and ongoing struggle of emancipation in diaspora,” and about “evolving hybrid subjectivity and changing moral agency” (“Women out of China,” 357).
- 54 I would like to thank Meenakshi Mukherjee and Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan for pointing this out to me.
- 55 Clifford, *Routes*, 256.
- 56 Ong, “Women out of China,” 355.
- 57 Hall, “When Was ‘the Post-Colonial?’” 247.
- 58 Arif Dirlik, *The Postcolonial Aura* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997).
- 59 Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” in *Identity*, ed. J. Rutherford (London: Lawrence Wishart, 1990), 237.
- 60 See Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, “Beyond ‘Culture’: Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference,” *Cultural Anthropology* 7, no. 1 (February 1992): 6–23, which suggests that cultures have always been hierarchically interconnected.
- 61 I thank Akhil Gupta for helping me work through some of the ideas presented in this paragraph.
- 62 See *ibid.*
- 63 Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 169, 166.
- 64 *Ibid.*, 160–161.
- 65 *Ibid.*, 176.
- 66 Marilyn Ivy, *Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity Phantasm Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 9–10.
- 67 *Ibid.*

