



Wanted Cultured Ladies Only!: Female Stardom and Cinema in India, 1930s-1950s

Neepa Majumdar

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Wanted Cultured Ladies Only! maps out the early culture of cinema stardom in India from its emergence in the silent era to the decade after Indian independence in the mid-twentieth century. Neepa Majumdar combines readings of specific films and stars with an analysis of the historical and cultural configurations that gave rise to distinctly Indian notions of celebrity. She argues that discussions of early cinematic stardom in India must be placed in the context of the general legitimizing discourse of colonial "improvement" that marked other civic and cultural spheres as well, and that "vernacular modernist" anxieties over the New Woman had limited resonance here. Rather, it was through emphatically nationalist discourses that Indian cinema found its model for modern female identities. Considering questions of spectatorship, gossip, popularity, and the dominance of a star-based production system, Majumdar details the rise of film stars such as Sulochana, Fearless Nadia, Lata Mangeshkar, and Nargis.

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