



Asian Studies Centre
St Antony's College
University of Oxford
South Asia Seminar, Week 2



Meena runs off the cricket-field with Motilal.

Feminine Abandon and the abducted Woman in post-Partition Shorey Comedies

Salma Siddique

Postdoctoral Research Fellow,
Berlin Graduate School Muslim Cultures
and Societies, Freie Universität Berlin

Tuesday November 15th, 2 p.m.
Fellows' Dining Room,
St Antony's College

Relocating to Bombay from Lahore after partition, the refugee filmmaker Roop Shorey made a series of romantic comedies

in independent India starring his collaborator-wife Meena Shorey. In these films, Meena wrestled men, scaled walls and drove tractors, demonstrating a complete disregard for received ideas of femininity, which most crucially involved making a spectacle of herself. This paper reads Meena's performance in a trilogy of romantic comedies, *Ek Thi Larki* (Once there was a girl, 1949), *Dholak* (Drumbeats, 1950) and *Ek-Do-Teen* (One Two Three, 1954) as a response to the gendered trauma of partition. Reconstituted as the runaway girl, Meena's unruly guise shares an allusive relationship with a partition figure – the abducted woman. While the literal instances of abduction within these films provide occasion for adventure and humour, the feminine abandon of the Shorey heroine speaks eloquently of her historical underside.

Salma Siddique trained as a film practitioner in New Delhi and completed her doctoral thesis, *Between Bombay and Lahore: A partition history of cinema in South Asia* at University of Westminster, London in 2015. She is now a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Berlin Graduate School Muslim Cultures and Societies, Freie Universität Berlin.

All are welcome

Convenor: Dr Faisal Devji.

Enquiries: asian@sant.ox.ac.uk or 01865-274559.

This seminar series is organised with the support of the History Faculty.

Picture: Actress Meena Shorey, Filmfare, January 7th, 1955.