

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Although books are written in relative loneliness, they are always marked by the kindness and generosity of many co-passengers. In writing this book, my heart and mind have been touched by many friends, family members, and mentors without whom I would not have completed it.

My dissertation chair Priya Jaikumar's support and encouragement over the years was crucial for this project. Her sharp thinking and meticulous organization shepherded me as I made my way through the maze of research. My committee members—Ellen Seiter, Nitin Govil, Kara Keeling, and Bhaskar Sarkar—guided and supported me to move beyond the conventional trappings of fieldwork and research. Ellen Seiter was more than just a committee member; her bounty of warmth kept me going even when there were significant challenges.

At USC, I want to thank Tara McPherson, J. D. Connor, Todd Boyd, Akira Lippit, Christine Acham, Bill Whittington, Michael Renov, Aniko Imre, Lan Duong, Laura Serna, Tania Modleski, Nancy Lutkehaus, Vanessa Schwartz, Sunyoung Park, Diana Blaine, Alicia Cornish, Maria Cheteboune, and Katherine Steinbach. Classes and conversations with Philana Payton, Şebnem Baran, Michael Turcious, Eszter Zimanyi, Emma Ben Ayoun, Sara Bakerman, Jake Bohrod, Darol Kay, and Ashley Young have made it an intellectually stimulating journey.

J. Devika's support and generosity was crucial for the completion of this project. The assurance that I could rely on her for critical input, as well as emotional support, was more than I could ask for. Priya Sangameswaran was always a strong advocate for me from my M.Phil. days and taught me how to combine academic rigor with humane values.

This book was first conceived as a dissertation at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, and I remember with fondness the support of Ira Bhaskar, Y. S. Alone, Ranjani Mazumdar, Veena Hariharan, and Udaya Kumar. Scholarly work by C. S. Venkiteswaran, Ratheesh Radhakrishnan, Jenson Joseph, Navaneeta Mokkil, Bindu Menon, Meena T. Pillai, Mohammed Shafeek, Manju Edachira, Sujith Parayil, Dileep Raj, and others working on Malayalam cinema were also crucial in setting up my project.

At various points, this project received the support of the USC Graduate School, USC's Visual Studies Research Institute, the Social Science Research Council, the American Institute of Indian Studies, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. The AIIS Dissertation-to-Book workshop session facilitated by Jyoti Puri and Harleen Singh helped me with the initial drafting of the book proposal. I am thankful to my media studies cohort at the workshop, Swapnil Rai and Padma Chirumamilla, for their helpful comments. Support for this research was provided by the University of Wisconsin–Madison's Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Graduate Education, with funding from the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation. I am also thankful to the First Book Award granted by the Center for Humanities that supported the book workshop, and for the generous comments and suggestions by Monika Mehta, Mireille Miller-Young, Preeti Chopra, and Lindsay Palmer.

I am fortunate to work in UW–Madison's Department of Communication Arts, and would like to thank Kelley Conway, Eric Hoyt, Aaron Greer, Jeff Smith, Ben Singer, Jeremy Morris, Jonathan Gray, Derek Johnson, Lori Lopez, Catalina Toma, Lyn von Swol, Zhongdang Pan, Sara McKinnon, Rob Asen, Jenell Johnson, and Rob Howard for the intellectual comradeship that made this book possible. Lynn Malone, Clara Schanck, and Sophie Houghland helped keep me on track with the book work and my many research trips. I am also grateful to Mary Rossa, Steffie Halverson, and Daniel Feuer for their wonderful company (and many a warm chat). A special shout-out to the “real, real executive committee”—Allison Prasch, Lillie Williamson, and Jason Lopez, who were the absolute best support group.

At the Center for South Asia, I want to thank Anthony Cerulli, Sarah Beckham, Preeti Chopra, Aparna Dharwadker, Mitra Sharafi, Todd Michelson-Ambelang, Mou Banerjee, Vinay Dharwadker, Priya Mukherjee, Venkat Mani, Viren Murthy, and Andrea Fowler. The warmth and generosity with which they welcomed me to Madison was a salve (especially since I moved to Madison during the pandemic). Thanks to Laurie Beth Clark, Sarah Wells, Paola S. Hernández, and Lori Diprette Brown for their comradeship.

My book owes its origin to the stimulating scholarship on adult media produced by a group of scholars, many of whom are part of the Adult Film History SIG at the Society of Cinema and Media Studies. As I was struggling to articulate why explicit media has to be studied on its own terms, I found an intellectual home among scholars who were able to support and mentor me. I am thankful to

Eric Schaefer, Constance Penley, Patrick Keilty, Elena Gorfinkel, Feona Attwood, Susanna Paasonen, Peter Alilunas, and Clarissa Smith, who have contributed to my thinking on pornography. Thanks to Brandon Arroyo, Finley Freibert, John Stadler, Rebecca Holt, Nikola Stepic, and Desirae Embree for their camaraderie. I also remember fondly the circle of South Asian scholars—Swarnavel Eswaran, Madhuja Mukherjee, Rashmi Sawney, Lotte Hoek, Pavitra Sundar, Tejaswini Ganti, Neepta Majumdar, Anuja Jain, Anupama Prabhala, Manishita Dass, Ravi Vasudevan, Kareem Khubchandani, Akshya Saxena, Monika Mehta, Sriram Mohan, Lia Wolock, and Pallavi Rao—who have enriched me with their insights.

As this work spanned a decade, I was fortunate to be supported by my respondents who went out of their way to open their personal archives and connect me with their networks to support my work. Sreekumar's generosity in connecting me with many distribution and exhibition agents in Kerala is fondly remembered. Special thanks to my Chennai-based respondents A. T. Joy, Thrikunnapuzha Sreekumar, Ponaiyan, P. Chandrakumar, Nagarajan, Kerala-based respondents Gladys, R. K. Prasad, and others who became an important part of this project's narrative. Mohsina Najeeb and Arathi M. R. helped me track down contacts and material. Thanks, Radhakrishnan, for the wonderful illustrations that accompany this book. Thanks to Unnamati Syama Sundar, Sarat Chandran, Priyaranjan Lal, Ammar Al Attar, David Farris, Mini Richard and Rajeev for allowing me to use their images.

Family and friends have been a crucial part of this journey as well. My parents, N. Sreedharan and Mini Syamala, and my brother, Vivek, have been a constant source of support. Over the years, they supported me despite their initial misgivings on the porn aspects of the project. Anima Baishya, Amit Baishya, Andreea Marculescu, and Leon were key sources of inspiration and gave me the much-needed emotional anchoring. My grandparents, Gopinathan and Shyamala; my father-in-law, Dwipen Baishya; and my close friend Anushree passed away before I could complete this book, but I like to think that they would have been happy to see its completion.

During research trips in India, I was fortunate to be in the company of Srinivasans in Chennai, the Tambes in Bombay, and the Niroop family in Calicut. They have all opened their doors and homes to me, and facilitated my research with warm food, a comfortable bed, and most of all, great company. Library personnel at Kerala University Library (Kerala Studies section), AKG Center Library (Trivandrum), Center for Development Studies Library (Trivandrum), Appan Thampuran Library (Thrissur), Chittira Thirunal Grandashala (Trivandrum), National Film Archive of India (NFAI) Pune, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (New Delhi), and *Mathrubhumi* archives (Calicut) were kind and helpful during my constant search for archival material. During the fieldwork in India, I was also lucky to be hosted by the Center for Development Studies (CDS) and Center for Cultural Studies, Institute of English. Individual collectors such as Gopan Sasthamangalam, Ethiran Kathiravan, and R. Gopalakrishnan have opened up their personal archives for me and enriched my work.

I would like to thank *Bioscope: South Asian Screen Studies*, *Feminist Media Histories*, and *Music, Sound and Moving Image* for granting me permission to reuse material that has been previously published.

A few friends deserve special mention—they not only facilitated my work but also served as emotional refuge. Spandan Bhattacharya has been a longtime friend, but as far as this book goes, was a crucial “field-agent.” He was generous with his time during my Kolkata fieldwork by accompanying me to many theaters where I would not have gained entry as a single woman or able to communicate as a non-Bengali. I would also like to thank P. K. Sreenivasan who helped me with the Kodambakkam leg of the fieldwork, and for his continued support remotely. Samhita Sunya was always there for me to chat about work and life. I would like to think of her as one of the guardian angels of this book.

Thanks to Maneesh Narayanan and Remya Raj for connecting me with the respondents, and for their support of this project. N. P. Sajeesh, Aparna Eswaran, Subin Menon, Anargha Niroop, Aswathy Sivaram, Priyanka H. S., Mehboob and Dipti Tambe are close friends who were there for me when I needed them. Without their constant support and their patience with my constant chattering about work, I may not have survived the writing process. Sarah O’Brien generously helped me with the flow of the arguments and how to make it a better read.

At UC Press, I want to thank Shelley Stamp for the support she offered to feature the book in the Feminist Media History series. Special thanks to Raina Polivka’s meticulous streamlining and advice that helped me with the timeline for the book. Sam Warren and Susan Larsen were a pleasure to work with, and I appreciate their advice and support.

Finally, I would like to thank Anirban, who has supported me throughout. His insights have been crucial in helping me develop my thinking and writing. He was my sounding board when I was wading through raw ideas. He has supported my scholarship in more ways than one, including of course, his legendary skills in the kitchen. This book might not have seen the light if not for his unconditional support.