A new nationalism is in the air today, a nationalism suffused with romantic love, with the most intimate and ‘private’ of emotions. Popular cinema in India draws our attention to this phenomenon: Roja (1992), for example, is advertised as ‘a patriotic love story’, and one of the more successful films of 1994 was called 1942: A Love Story. This nationalism appears to be premised on a detaching of the new middle class from the Nehruvian state of the post-Independence years, a process that has led to changes in the meaning of some of the key terms in our political life, such as ‘secularism’, for example. It is almost as if the hitherto hidden logic of the national-modern is now acquiring visibility owing to a new configuration of forces which include the rise of the Sangh Parivar and the liberalization of the Indian economy. The portrayal of ‘mainstream’ characters—unexceptional, not particularly ‘heroic’—in commercial cinema provides one point of access to this complex configuration. Central to the shift in the national imaginary, as I shall show, is the figure of woman. In this negotiation of the new modernity, the woman is not presented as just a passive counter; rather, her agency is shown as crucial for the shifts that are taking place.