

gender appears as a spiral from which one cannot escape, it also appears as a means to disrupt established roles and the myth of subject identities governed by gender and racial categories. This chapter shows how dancing, walking in the citystreets, connecting to the erotic and abjecting one's body as taking affirmative forms. The author through this chapter attempts to reveal the film's creation of space and bodies as processes in sustained transformation while being essentially focused on the ways in which the woman protagonist inhabits the city wilfully. The author tries to specifically demonstrate how different scenes of dancing in the film connotes the protagonists complete habitation of the cinematic space, her wilfulness, and identity. This chapter tries to argue that abjection can take a wilful form as an act of resistance to the ever complicating nexus of gendering and racialisation of the self. Recognizing the complexity of uninhabitable subject identities Ceuterick's propositions in this chapter that the erotic and abject forms affirmatively underscores the scope for the conception of subjects as 'deeply liminal'.

The women in Cauternick's book can be found in spaces that are historically exclusionary or legitimised as masculine. The book travels to filmic representations of women's spatialities and locates a language to extract affirmative movement from representations to challenge the problematic of replacing women through binary models of gender and mobility. The 'fluid' understanding of space designed in the book allows varied readings of gender on screen with a sustained focus on depicting women characters, their relationship to space, mobility and imagination.

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EXPLORATIONS IN CINEMA THROUGH CLASSICAL INDIAN THEORIES: NEW INTERPRETATIONS OF MEANING, AESTHETICS, AND ART. By Gopalan Mullik. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020. 351 pp.

The relationship between literary theory, philosophy and films is accurately summarised by Gopalan Mullik in the introduction to his book, with an initial focus on Western philosophers. Irrespective of the comprehensive nature of the introduction, the initial pages set the tone of the book and its purpose: to provide a stimulating Indian addendum in the Western understanding of films through its philosophy. Upon realising that "classical Indian theories would not make sense to the readers unless a Vedic paradigm of thought was constructed as its basis" (Mullik, 2020: 9), he sets out to construct this paradigm himself. This daring and novice attempt situates Indian philosophy in the picture of the world's understanding of cinema. The five chapters penned down by Mullik chart the progress of the book, from an overwhelming dependence on Western thinkers to understand cinema that might not be essentially Western, to developing a structure which could assimilate both Indian and international cinema from a decidedly Indian perspective.

The first chapter (after the Introduction) works its way through the methods of André Gaudreault and Tom Gunning in their representation of "Early cinema", after it critiques classical, contemporary and cognitive film theories for their shortcomings. This critique comes from an omniscient perspective, and substantiates itself with an internalised understanding of Indian and Western theories about appreciation of art and literature. Notwithstanding the development of film theories based on the narrative style, this chapter contradicts Ingmar Bergman's "The Making of film", "When I show a film I am guilty of deceit. I am using an apparatus which is constructed to take advantage of a certain human weakness, an apparatus with which I can sway my audience in a highly emotional manner - to laugh, scream with fright, smile, believe in fairy stories, become

indignant, be shocked, be charmed, be carried away or perhaps yawn with boredom". Whereas Bergman posits the art of film-making as an artificial process, Mullik understands films as an independent and autonomous identity.

The second chapter functions as a statutory warning to the uninitiated; starting from the law of conservation of energy, Mullick quickly jumps to an Indian paradigm to understand aspects like Nyaya-Vaisesika, Mimamsa, Samkhya-Yoga, Advaita Vedanta and Kashmir Shaivism, all of which are intertwined interdependently. This chapter deals with the complexity of these functions, to show how "a proper study of them can throw new light on how different cultures negotiate reality and the arts including that of cinema" (Mullick, 2020: 65). The chapter delineates the narrative styles used in Vedic cosmology, and shifts to the larger implications in World philosophy in the context of an Indian understanding of time and space, which are subsequently reflected in the making and understanding of films. For instance, in the last section of this chapter, he refers to the work of Alice Boner to illustrate the subtle yet sure differences of the Indian and Western ways of understanding culture through sculptures and their geometric implications, and how that could be used to understand the broad world of cinema.

The relationship established at the brief of the third chapter, "Mode of Appearance in Perception = Qualificand + Qualifier + Relationship" (Mullik, 2020: 103) reminds one of the structuralist paradigm of meaning, which is essentially the difference between the signifier and the signified. The chapter is indebted to Saussure and his *Course in General Linguistics*, since the qualificand and the qualifier share many characteristics with the signified and the signifier, respectively. Mullik sways swiftly between narrative integration where he situates an incident and art as a whole, and the various levels of perception (simple and complex) which could be used for understanding each element of a film separately. This apparent dilemma contributes to the versatility of the book, where every possible aspect is explored to its deepest possible depth. This chapter smoothly sails through the theory of absence (which has often been used, from Western perspectives to understand cinema), visual synesthesia, and moves to a Lacanian understanding of the intersectional aspects of the Saussurian understanding of sign, and his understanding of the generic divisions of cinema.

The fourth chapter deals with a more direct relation between the *navarasas* and cinema. The evocation of *rasa* and *sringara* in the body of the actor while they perform on stage, is reminiscent of how an actor performs for the camera. Bhatta Nayaka's breakthrough about "the audiences' prior knowledge that an artwork is a "fictional" work [that] generalizes their experiences" (Mullik, 2020: 205) is true for both cinema and theatre, and Mullik here essentially extends the reading of the *Natyasastra* onto the domain of film studies. This unique attempt at unifying the three kinds of aesthetic categories of relish, saturation and immersion into a broader understanding of visual media has multiple implications in interdisciplinary research. When Mullik writes about the Indian notion of *darsana* and the voyeuristic connotations of it, the way a film or a play is viewed comes to mind. This chapter fundamentally questions the methods used to comprehend and apprehend cinema as a form of art, and analyses whether a layman has any authority or agency to analyse such a piece of art, since they are just staring at a two or three-dimensional space.

The fifth chapter, which conglomerates Indian aesthetic theory with art, is reminiscent of Satyajit Ray's words in his *Our Films, Their Films*, "In the immense complexity of its creative process, it [cinema] combines in various measures the functions of poetry, music, painting, drama, architecture ... and it also combines the cold logic of science with the subtlest abstractions of the human imagination" (19). The revival of lost sensations through *dhvani-sastra* is best expressed through cinema, according to Mullik. Amalgamating the positions of Ray and Mullik, cinema can be thus understood as the medium which unites the five modes mentioned in this final chapter. The suggestive nature of *dhvani* finds itself linked to the multifarious world of cinema, and the connective link remains the wide array of possible and suggestive interpretations offered by both of these creative expressions. When Mullik connects the unifying principle of Brahman = Atman to films, it comes as a surprise that he uses an Italian film, Federico Fellini's *La Dolce Vita*

(1960), to illustrate the use of sound and its importance in the context of films. An Indian film like *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen* (1969), where the protagonists use their “divine”² music to entice the listeners and thus solve the problems between the kingdoms of Halla and Shundi, would perhaps have been a better fit.

In the concluding section, the book questions the logic behind using Western theories to understand cinema, especially when the demand and production of cinema in India is more than the average demand of it in the West (Mullik: 2020, 314). Mullik does a convincing job of extracting examples from both the West and India to illustrate his rhetoric of an Indian theory of understanding films. This attempt, both novice and thorough, reeks of a postcolonial aroma around it, indicating the intention (albeit secondary) to place Indian theories at par with their Western counterparts, as opposed to submitting to the Western theories with the blatantly wrong assumption that India has no substantive answer to the questions which are raised by film theory and critics, while in their attempt to appreciate or criticise films.

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