



Madras Studios: Narrative, Genre, and Ideology in Tamil Cinema

By Swarnavel Eswaran Pillai

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This book documents the history of Tamil cinema, one of the most colossal film industries in the world, and studies the major studios of Madras, the largest outside classical Hollywood in the private sector.

It engages with five major studios of Madras Modern Theatres, AVM, Gemini, Vijaya-Vauhini, and Prasad through the origins of their founders, and explicates how their history influenced the narratives, genre, and ideology of the canonical films made in Madras studios, arguing for their lasting influence on Tamil cinema.

Based on rare primary and secondary materials, and oral history, this book engages with Tamil cinema at the intersection of its industrial, cultural, and socio-political history to argue for its specificity in terms of its aesthetics and its belief in the potential of the medium to mobilize audiences for ideology, politics, and reflexivity.

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Editorial Review

Review

“Brace yourself for a ringside view of Madras studios! Original in its conception and elegant in execution ... this book will emerge as a standard bearer for scholarship on cinema studios....”

(Lalitha Gopalan)

“What I find even more compelling is the way [the author] links the films of the major studios with contemporary Tamil cinema to provocatively argue for the affect of the genocide in neighboring Sri Lanka on the Tamil psyche.”

(S. Theodore Baskaran)

This book is a necessary read for anyone who wishes to understand not just Tamil cinema but the politics and culture which shaped it.

(Venkatesh Chakravarthy)

About the Author

Swarnavel Eswaran Pillai, PhD, is assistant professor in the English, and Media and Information Departments at Michigan State University.

He is a graduate of the premier film school in Asia, The Film and Television Institute of India, and is an accomplished documentarian whose films include *Thangam*, *The Indian National Army*, and *Villu* (The Bow). His recent documentaries are *Unfinished Journey* (2012) and *Migrations of Islam* (2014), and he is currently working on *Hmong Memories at the Crossroads*.

He earned his doctoral degree in film studies from the prestigious University of Iowa, and his research areas include the history, theory, and production of documentaries and experimental films, and the specificity of Tamil cinema and its complex relationship with Hollywood as well as popular Hindi cinema.

His recent publications include the book *Cinema: Sattagamum Saalaramum* (Cinema: Frame and a Window) (2012), an anthology of scholarly essays in Tamil on documentaries and experimental films, and the essays 1970s Tamil Cinema and the Post-Classical Turn (2014), and *Mirugavidusagam: Theatre of the Body, Ritual, and Land* (2013).

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