

**ST. JOSEPH’S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), BANGALORE – 27**

**VI SEMESTER BA-COMMUNICATIVE ENGLISH**

**END SEMESTER EXAMINATION: MAY-JUNE 2023**

**COMMUNICATIVE ENGLISH - FILM WRITING: CE 6222**

**Time- 2½ hours Max Marks- 70**

**Instructions:**

1. **This paper is for students of III CPE who have chosen the Film Writing elective.**
2. **This paper has THREE SECTIONS and THREE printed pages.**
3. **Please provide word counts following every response that you make.**
4. **You are allowed to use a dictionary.**

**I. Answer the following questions in about 150 words each. (3x10=30)**

1. Are there films/genres you used to watch and that you don’t anymore? What do you think accounts for this change in your taste?
2. Imagine a producer with deep pockets has given you carte blanche to make *your* film. What would it be about, and how would you stage the first five minutes of it?
3. Let us say Netflix reaches out to you to curate a ‘row’ of films that will appear on their front page, immediately after their most watched list. What films will you bring together into this row, and what will you call this collection?

**II. Read the excerpt below and answer the questions that follow.**

Poet and polymath A. K. Ramanujan once wrote a serious essay that he playfully titled, "Is There an Indian Way of Thinking?" It began by querying its own question, for Ramanujan was aware of the risk of essentialism (and its past deployment by orientalists, Marxists, nationalists, etc.) when approaching a vast region of greater ethnic and linguistic diversity than Europe. Yet as a trained linguist and folklorist, he was indeed interested in the recurring patterns and themes that lend a distinctive flavor to South Asian culture—a flavor that may be especially recognizable to an outsider, or to an insider who steps out.

That Indian popular films have a definite flavor is generally recognized, even by Anglo-Americans who encounter them while surfing cable TV channels—and not simply because the films’ actors happen to be Indian. The films look, sound, and feel different in important ways, and a kind of cinematic culture-shock may accompany a first prolonged exposure. I recall an American film scholar, after viewing his first "masala blockbuster," remarking to me that the various cinemas he had studied—American, French, Japanese, African—all seemed to play by a similar set of rules, “…but this is a different universe.” Experienced viewers are familiar with the sometimes-negative responses of neophyte visitors to this universe: the complaint that its films “all look the same,” are mind-numbingly long, have incoherent plots and raucous music, belong to no known genre but appear to be a mish-mash of several, and are naive and crude imitations of "real" (Hollywood) movies, etc.—all, by the way, complaints that are regularly voiced by some Indians as well, particularly by critics writing in English. They also know that millions of people, including vast audiences outside the subcontinent, apparently understand and love the “difference” of these films.

Ramanujan published his essay in the anthology India Through Hindu Categories (Marriott 1990), which was part of a broad if sporadic effort within the Euro-American academy, spurred by the post-World War II interest in interdisciplinary “area studies,” to understand other cultures in their own terms, and to acknowledge the assumptions rooted in Western intellectual tradition that had unconsciously biased previous inquiries. For South Asia, the standard narratives of history, religion, and literature had largely emerged out of the colonial-era collaboration of British and Indian elites; given the asymmetry of power in this collaboration, the expectations of the former often influenced the information they received from the latter, which in turn shaped the explanatory narratives they crafted and then (through the colonial knowledge economy) exported back to their native subjects. Despite recent efforts to question or deconstruct the received narratives of “Hinduism” (as a monolithic ideology; see von Stietencron 1995), “caste” (as a rigid “system” and distinctively Indian form of social organization; see Dirks 2001), and even language (in the case of Hindi and Urdu, as reified and religion-specific; see Rai 2001), scholars still remain far from the goal (to cite the title of another recent study) of “provincializing Europe”—turning the lens on the all-seeing eye of Euro-American intellectual (and material) hegemony (Chakrabarty 2000).

In the realm of film studies, the Copernican discourse has been of “cinema” in general (i.e., American), with sub-specializations in “national cinemas” orbiting around its sun, each represented by a few key auteur-names. India has long been represented by Satyajit Ray, and “all those musicals”—in embarrassing fact, some 30,000 of them, and counting. That this enormous and influential body of popular art, ignored for decades, is now beginning to receive scholarly notice suggests the need for, at least, systemic realignment (as when a big new planet swims into our ken); a more audacious suggestion is that its “different universe” might make possible an Einsteinian paradigm-shift by introducing new ways of thinking about the space-time of cinematic narrative.

(Philip Lutgendorf, Is there an Indian way of filmmaking?)

**II.A. Answer the following questions in about five-six sentences each (4x5=20)**

1. “…films all look the same,” are mind-numbingly long, have incoherent plots and raucous music, belong to no known genre but appear to be a mish-mash of several…” Is this true? How do you view this when film reviewers and the media regularly note Indian films with labels such as Sports film (Chak De India), Thriller (Dhrishyam/U Turn), Action (War/Thunivu) and such?
2. What do you think are the assumptions rooted in Western culture that looks at the Indian film as a film of the “other”?
3. What Einsteinian paradigm shifting way of thinking about Indian films can we, as people who think about and watch films, provide?
4. What is a ‘masala blockbuster’? Where do you think are the roots of this type of film?

**III. Answer ANY ONE of the questions below in about 250 words. (20 marks)**

1. Is there a film you saw both in the theatre and at home, on TV or on a streaming service? Compare the film-watching experience and tell us which was the better one, and why? What therefore are the learnings you can draw from this?
2. Cite two films that were given potentially questionable/wrong ratings by the CBFC/rating authority, and detail what you think may be the reasons for it. What alternate ratings would you have given the films?

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