



A Very Old Machine: The Many Origins of the Cinema in India (SUNY series, Horizons of Cinema)

Sudhir Mahadevan

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Argues that Indian cinema's deep nineteenth-century past continues to play a vital role in its twenty-first-century present.

In *A Very Old Machine*, Sudhir Mahadevan shows how Indian cinema's many origins in the technologies and practices of the nineteenth century continue to play a vital and broad function in its twenty-first-century present. He proposes that there has never been a singular cinema in India; rather, Indian cinema has been a multifaceted phenomenon that was (and is) understood, experienced, and present in everyday life in myriad ways. Employing methods of media archaeology, close textual analysis, archival research, and cultural theory, Mahadevan digs into the history of photography, print media, practices of piracy and showmanship, and contemporary everyday imaginations of the cinema to offer an understanding of how the cinema came to be such a dominant force of culture in India. The result is an open-ended and innovative account of Indian cinema's "many origins."

"Sudhir Mahadevan's *A Very Old Machine* is a work of great theoretical sophistication and rigorous historical scholarship. A revisionist and definitive treatment of early Indian film, the book shows how prevailing attitudes toward technology, photography, empire, commodity, and mass culture made the cinema a socially and culturally distinct form in India. Drawing on a wealth of primary research, *A Very Old Machine* fills many gaps. Anyone who wants to know how Indian cinema became Indian will need to consult this book." — James Morrison, editor of *Hollywood Reborn: Movie Stars of the 1970s*

Sudhir Mahadevan is Associate Professor in the Department of Comparative Literature, Cinema and Media at the University of Washington.

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