

TRG Poverty and Education at the GHI London  
presents

# Making Cinema 'Useful': pedagogies and publics in India, c1920 - 1960

A talk by Ravi Vasudevan

How did colonial and early post-colonial governments and film entrepreneurs use film to circulate information and engage different types of public? This presentation reviews the variety of pedagogical projects and audience categories which went into making cinema a 'useful' vehicle of information, and the social and infrastructural apparatuses deployed for film circulation and exhibition. These ranged from cinema theatres, film libraries, class rooms, cultural clubs, amateur associations and army units to mobile vans, railways cinema cars and open-air exhibitions. The talk will also explore how 'useful' cinema in South Asia was embedded in a transnational network of discussion about how to solicit and shape audiences, involving colonial administrators, anthropologists, educationists and film appreciation ideologues.

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Ravi Vasudevan works in the area of film and media history at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi, and at Sarai, the Centre's urban and media research programme. His work on cinema explores issues in film, social history, politics, and contemporary media transformation. He is visiting faculty at Jadavpur University, Kolkata, and Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi, and is currently on a fellowship with the Transnational Research Group, 'Poverty and Education', German Historical Institute. Vasudevan's publications include *Making Meaning in Indian Cinema* (edited, 2000) and *The Melodramatic Public: Film Form and Spectatorship in Indian Cinema* (2010). He is a founder-editor of the journal, *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies*.

