

INDIAN CINEMA AS A PSYCHOGEOGRAPHICAL TOOL IN ANALYSING THE CINEMATIC CITIES

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ABSTRACT

The research paper probes the cinematic city which is not just a space of fixed geometrical entity, but a perspective involved in the psychoanalytic study of the spatial representation. Within the theoretical framework of Spatial, Cultural and Film theories the paper questions the issues of cultural identity. The city is a palimpsest often considered as the performative space where identities are created and questioned. The study entails the spatial dynamics of cinema where the filmmaker is a potential urban planner in the cognitive process of mapping sites. Cinema is an art of capturing the space with relative speed in correspondence with time, is understood as every space is dynamic with respect to time. The narrative demands the slow emancipation of space as it takes several intense forms in mind between the filmmaker and the viewer

KEYWORDS: Psychogeography, Parkour, Decommissioned, Biennale, Psychospace, Cartography

INTRODUCTION

The literature of modernity dates from Baudelaire's nineteenth century essays on modern life and particularly his 1859 essays, "The Painter of Modern Life". For Baudelaire the term 'flaneur' appears as modern hero who experiences and epitomizes the fragmented and anonymous nature of life in modern city experiencing the ephemeral aspects of urban life. Flaneur is a concept propounded by Charles Baudelaire to speak about a 'stroller' who moves through the labyrinthine street and hidden spaces of the city, consuming its attractions and fearful pleasures, but remaining detached and apart.

Merlin Coverley in her book 'Psychogeography' quotes Walter Benjamin from his A Berlin Chronicle in which he speaks about being Flaneuse and the art of straying:

Not to find one's way in a city may well be uninteresting and banal. It requires ignorance-nothing more. But to lose oneself in a city –as one loses oneself in a forest-that calls for quite a different schooling. Then signboards and street names, passers-by, roofs, kiosks, or bars must speak to the wanderer like a cracking twig under his feet, like the startling call of a bittern in the distance, like the sudden stillness of a clearing with a lily standing erect in its centre. (63)

The films have the tendency to teach the viewers across the globe to imagine a city. Thus the imaginary landscapes have all potential to convert itself into a cinematic landscape. The urban space remains itself representational, as simultaneously sensory and symbolic. The films, which succeed the earlier classics, consider it as a text where the city space is designed and re-designed in accordance to time that space is directly lived in, used and habituated. It is an act of transforming a concrete space into an imaginary space, which tries to reproduce the 'real'. Thereby we have to assume that the intention of the cinematic city is to recapitulate the topography of the mind as well as the 'real'. The mind conceives

the cinematic city considering the earlier cinema, which images the city as a text, and the act of the depiction of the city is more or less like taking the material from unconscious and superimposes this emotionally charged matter upon space. We are now bound to accept this superimposition as the reality itself and act towards the external world as if it were our own body confusing a blend of the self with the space.

The production of cities through geographical imaginations reflects upon how individual and communities understand their relation to one another in the space. Here cinema is considered as a spatial practice and the filmmaker, an urban planner who would be equally implicated in the geographical understanding of the experience and consumption of the place. Cinema depicts the hyper-real state of the city (cinematic city) as an output of the imagination of the actual space. The mental concept of the city is constructed along with the historical time period. The history shapes the city to make the city real to the time depicted. What remains common in nature is the changing mode of the mental city that is subjected for its obscurity between the filmmaker and the viewer. Cinema constructs a cultural geography. Culture, like every physical and social activity is both spatially structured and geographically expressed. The semiotic image of the city in the cinema remains as a powerful mode of visualizing and representing the spatial aspects of how cultures form, interact and change the spatial behavior of the people.

Mapping the city is a vital tool of analysis and a significant mode of representation in the study of interconnection between culture and space. The filmmaker maps the geography as the cartographic form where the geography is measured on a manageable scale. The mental map is twice created in the process of cinema production and its reception. Considering a cinematic city the filmmaker brings out the conventional signs, color, shades contours, graphic symbols producing a strong singer which is highly subjective and ideological. This idea becomes power when it is forced to the viewer to accept the subjective text as an objective.

The research paper probes the city which is not just a space of fixed geometrical entity, but is a perspective involved in the psychoanalytic study of the spatial representation. The filmmaker who is conceived as the urban planner depends on the previous textual city which helps him to locate his cognitive city in the absolute space according to the time demanded for the progression of the script. Here the city is psychological resultants which exist before the spatial representation of the geography. The cinema asserts the imagined city of the filmmaker as the real but actually in the process of film-making the real city exhausts from the representation; It is the unattainable space that is beyond representation. But cinema emerging as a system of power asserts the metaphysical presence of the city as the 'real'. It is a dismembered unity which legitimizes the geography with stereotyped images and signs.

The city that escapes between the cinematic space and the cognitive Mindscape is entrapped in a system of entropy, which configures a maximum disorder. The filmmaker makes the city in cinema to make people orient in the urban situations by means of mental maps. The filmmaker uses his potential to free the images from a fixed point of view and the cycle repeats for the viewer who has to assimilate the cinematic city into cognitive city. Here the city conceived by the viewer is the subjective perception. He co-ordinates the derived images of the city as the semiotic imageries. They both map the imagined space of cities while the process of the production of an absolute space.

The cartographical reading of the city has taken a new phase with the digital age of users with the compactness software and applications to design and re-design the spatial topography. These innovative methods of representation of the maps and pin-dropping the geography (where you are dropped at a particular place or the place is dropped on you) has

even made labeling the juxtaposed places uncannily convenient like the designing of the mental space by a filmmaker. This novice technology has given the scope for the geographers/urban planners/filmmakers to read the available gaps within the ideological maps where places have been standing as an ontological history. The places here as 'idea' being transmitted from boundaries to boundaries within celluloid; geographers with the new digital era and the filmmakers since Lumiere brothers were attempting to position the same idea of 'place' in every human brain. The digital cartography of the places are even viewed in the 360 degrees as even animated as 2D in web browsers and 3D in movies. This dimensional aspect of the map like a Google-Earth plug-in navigates through the mental spaces. The degree of imposition is objective while delivering the geospatial data unlikely compared to the complicated navigation through the subjective cinematic spaces.

The scope of naming the street, naming the existing one and dropping pins at new destinations quoting the panoramic imagery at the street level, analyzing the areas, estimating the boundaries, the latitudinal and longitudinal degrees of procuring; the abrupt running through the cityscapes or through the 3D cityscapes using high resolution imageries to question the identity of the place and consecutively the space that is existing irrespective of the solid identity. The dialectical relationship shared between the space and place is the onset of the magical travel of the spectators within the celluloid of power and time. The question here is how the identity is formed within the subset of Google earth and cinema where we gaze through the varied imageries of the cityscapes. The mock up cartographers of the Google earth has designed, -re-designed the cityscape where every individual is invited to be urban planners or for that matter planners of any landscape that pretends to exist or still exist than simply existing as active voyeurs as in cinema. The entire geography of the earth is opened before as palimpsest and cinematic landscapes as a subtext where the important idea is the discourse created by the imageries on/about spaces, the spaces are stretched out social relation which is equally responsible for the production of psycho geography!

The transmogrified city as a museum in the labeled city itself opens up the scope for voyeurism. There the images exist as volatile graffitis, the psyched spaces, perhaps that hugely imposes the idea of a city as cosmopolitan (Biennale); there is a definite willingness of the world artist to communicate with the city. The city is a site of desire that opens up as a tourist guide while the filmmaker stands as a psychopath and intriguing with his convoluted ideas of the city mounted within his limit of lived or cognitive spatial reality of the psycho spaces produced under the constraint of time.

The product images acts as a text where reality is built on the Kevin Lynch's idea of creation of a city and its active ingredients: Path, edge, district, node, and landmark. He emphasizes on the legibility of a city's composition to establish its 'places'. The importance of legibility and image ability of the city makes the city design more absolute between the user and the city. The ever pervasive idea of the city is based on the consensus of the perception. Let it be the cartographer or the filmmaker the imageability of the idea of a place is far objective as a frame of reference for the cartographer while the filmmaker keeps on tripping between the pervading spaces from his head and reality. He is at risk to represent the reality as 'real' to conceive his spectators. Here the order creates his mere logos and logic that is easily subjected to questions.

The threat lies within the absolute imageability of the city. The city in its axial point of power makes it a Panopticon, the site to be viewed on irrespective of places like shoveling into the identity of the streets, the narrow lanes to districts to bigger states of the definite geometry of strict spatial partitioning. As a Foucault's theory of power states the

linkage of knowledge to power and the power in creation of truth into true just as a filmmaker turning the reality into reality. Here the power is in the produced domains of an absolute geography with landmark. The power is exercised by viewing the other, estimating the actual boundaries and actions of the mob within surveillance.

The cinema and the city exist as interdependent. They mutually complement each other. It is the city that gave space for the cinema to flourish and it is the cinema that defined the city and contributed its essential features. The Indian cinema produced in the cities like Bombay, Madras, and Calcutta ten years after the Lumiere Brothers screened their first cinema. Still, these cities are ideologically defined by the cinema, capturing their growth, status, style and passion during the time period it shifted its acquired new identity to Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata imparting the traits of conceiving metropolitan cities. Thematically, this cinema has, since its inception, been constantly fascinated with the representation of the distinctive spaces, lifestyles, and human conditions of the city from the Lumiere brothers' Paris from 1895 to Satyajit Ray's Pather Panchali. Ray, was therefore able to bring about the synthesis between the western scientific approach and the instinctive tradition of India, taking the landscape from West Bengal and superimposing in some manner a rationalist and positivist mind on beliefs close to superimposition and on fossilized social practices. The basic contrary is pulled between the cultural cinematic spaces of Detroit and Calcutta. They rest within differences, but with a huge similarity I found in the research while considering both cities psycho geographical. As the select city for research is narrowed to Calcutta in Indian scenario is contrasted with Detroit, where the world has seen the rise and fall of a giant capitalism. With the effect of the fall the study contours the vacant spaces of the city of the mind affected because of the paralyzed city. The city exists as the ghost of a grand past. The Detroit is now configured as the Detroit before the crisis and Detroit after the crisis. This city is transported through films and manuscripts. The movement is contrasted with the other cosmopolitan capitals where speed is a cumbersome tool in analyzing the dynamicity of playful experiences. The narrow alleys, the districts, streets, the transparent conglomeration of buildings are the essence of the city with the chances of getting lost in the space. The game planner has decided to fix the surveillance as city emerges as a power structure. This city qualifies to be an interactive 3D model based on media databases

The epistemological city is power and it is the end product of every social-spatial discourse, be it Maps or Cinema. The identity of the man is contested within this powerful system of his geographical marking and his aesthetically induced cultural identity. What he derives from the concrete/ psychospace is susceptible to distortion for the transmuted quality of the space, where he is Geo-politically situated. The observation from select cinema set in the landscape of Calcutta and the heartland of Detroit is read together for their shared stark similarities. This could be an observation basically on the dynamicity of the landscapes. How profound is the influence of the culture is evident from the observation. It explains the historicity of the region itself. The land taken from history slips into history every now and then. The existence of an idea is momentarily pronounced in the present. The tendency of the city to slip into its past, even affecting the topography of mind. Not all cities are under the time frame of speed. Some being caught in the ghostly past of the city are reduced to symbols and are susceptible to manipulation instantaneously on screens. As per Paul Virilio's term 'dromology'; the analysis of the increasing speed of transport and communications on the development of land; the analysis is based on the construct of speed. Despite being a metropolitan city Calcutta has flaunted its cultural geography over capitalism; It is the way how culture is intertwined with the compositional elements to upgrade a landscape as a cityscape.

The effect of psycho geography is also heightened with cartophony. This technique is found in modern city films

where sync-sound is used to capture the real living place' voices. The polyphony could also be the memory from ones lived space. The winding reels from the Pre-modern films, the time lapse, the pauses and the contributing studio induced sound shows the need of a claustrophobic space (studio) where sound is not escaped during the creative mix for the creation of a place. Even the neo sound practices could induce misophonia for the vulnerable. This detailing is an art that consciously takes us through the city with the projected sound.

The psycho geographical attempt to position the city in spectator's mind is made to the cinema. The scientific process it takes in the assimilation of the idea questions its existence, if the space is questioned so as the identity. This emphasis the instability or the 'real' element that is consciously projected onto a screen. Cinemas suffice this infinite void. Earlier the sound is juxtaposed for reality, but now the spot voices are even captured for simulation of real. This is a conscious effort to make us feel the surrounding by connecting with our lived space life experiences.

Whoever the filmmaker takes this part of his experiential city either topographically or mentally, but basically liable to the countries/companies that owns the satellites for the production of the places. The city that transits between the cinematic and the cognitive mindscapes is entrapped in a system of entropy, which configures a maximum disorder, but the legitimization of the geography as the physical urban environment makes a filmmaker an urban planner. He makes the city in cinema to make people orient in the urban situations by means of mental maps. The filmmaker uses his potential to free the images from a fixed point of view and the cycle repeats for the viewer who has to assimilate the cinematic city into cognitive city. Here the city conceived by the viewer is a perception. He coordinates the derived images of the city as the semiotic imageries. Cartography of the urban cape happens with the filmmaker as well as the viewer, they both map the imagined spaces of cities while in the process of the production of an absolute space.

This homogeneity of the idea is alarming as the extension of the individual psychological disorders to the social condition of an entire metropolis was on one level perhaps no more than metaphorical hyperbole. This enunciated disorder is explicit in the cinematic production of the space and the idea that escapes into our cognitive system of understanding. This plasticity of the space; the city is in erasure which has the highest degree of disorder being a descended space for imagination. In this way every cinematically produced space is under scrutiny. Their identity is questioned while the real idea of the city is still to be situated. Likewise, it is deduced that the city doesn't exist as an absolute entity, it is merely the feeling of perception based on ones depiction or self knowledge. This psychos pace is contested into human lives and in most cases the real becomes fictional moreover like the elements exhausted from the celluloid to the real. Every produced space in cinema is a decommissioned one. It slips into history and it is impossible to recreate, but possible, to build superstructures on the pre-existing designs. This decommissioning ends when it is a space in the filmmaker's mind.

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