Dedication

I DEDICATE THIS WORK TO ALL THE MISUNDERSTOOD PEOPLE IN THE WORLD

IN

THE MEMORY OF RITWIK GHATAK

ON HIS BIRTH CENTENARY YEAR IN 2025

Certificate

This is to certify that this thesis titled, “Many Spaces in/of Cinema: Ritwik Ghatak’s Films,” submitted by Bhairab Barman to the Indian Institute of Technology Jodhpur for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, is a bonafide record of the research work done by him under my supervision. To the best of my knowledge, the contents of this report, in full or in parts, have not been submitted to any other Institute or University for the award of any degree or diploma.



Dr. Parichay Patra

Thesis Supervisor

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis, submitted to the School of Liberal Arts at the Indian Institute of Technology Jodhpur, for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, is my own work. All the sources used by me have been acknowledged. Any assistance received in preparing this thesis, from a person or a film is duly acknowledged in the text or in the references, wherever applicable. I confirm that this work has not been submitted for any other academic degree or recognition at any other institution.



Bhairab Barman

Roll No. P20HS004

Doctoral Scholar

School of Liberal Arts, IIT Jodhpur

NH 62, Nagaur Road, Karwar, Jodhpur, 342030

Date: 07/01/25

ABSTRACT

This project on film aesthetics explores how space operates in films as both a physical construct and a conceptual apparatus. Primarily through *mise-en-scène* analysis, I look into how the filmed spaces of the pro-filmic spaces contribute to the visual and sensory encounter of the filmic spaces. I study how the filmmaker creates, represents, philosophizes space in films. And, thus, I seek the strata of significance woven into cinematic spaces. The thesis concentrates on spatial dynamics in films through a case study of Ritwik Ghatak's cinematic oeuvre. By analyzing the filmmaker's use of the spatial centres, and spatial dynamics, the study uncovers the apparent thematic meanings embedded in the spaces of the films. It looks at the marginalized middle-class experience in the metropolitan city space, the cultural tensions in the *adivasi* space, and the yearning for an idealized rural space. Through camerawork, the filmmaker critiques urban alienation, and romanticizes the lost harmony of rurality. It then delves into the suburban space of refugee colonies. Utilizing landscapes, and intertextuality to depict the trauma of loss, and the yearning for a unified homeland, the films capture the fragmentedness of spaces. The emphasis of the thesis, next, moves to the sublime space of riverine landscapes as metaphysical representations of a land's eternal essence. The filmmaker constructs a sublime spatio-temporality. It speculates on the resilience of the land by means of the interaction between river and people, by addressing existential concerns. It, further, focuses on the filmmaker's dialogic approach in discursive spaces where spatiality becomes a medium for political discourse. By means of journeys across cityscapes, rural spaces, and ultimately forests, the filmmaker offers critiques of the contemporary. The dissertation concludes by theorizing the filmmaker's legacy

as a modernist filmmaker by using space to evoke regional, national, and global cultural dialogues in creative collision. Such utilization of a relay of space, sound, and images redefines spatiality in Indian cinema. The study highlights the power of the medium called cinema to transform space into a narrative agent, by offering insights into human existence.

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