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‘It’s Time to Disco’: The Changing Soundscape of Hindi Cinema in the 1970s and 1980s

While much has been written on Indian melodrama and the role of music, there has been little study on the function of music within the melodramatic form. Certainly, Qureshi (1986), Ranade (1994), Chandavarkar et al, and publications in the journal of *Cinema Vision India* in 1980, as well as Arnold (1991), Manuel (1993), and more recently Morcom (2007), Booth (2008) and articles in the *Journal of Moving Image* (No.6, 2007), have dealt with issues of Hindi film music and sound. Nevertheless, what remains somewhat unaddressed is the complex colonial context in which ‘eclectic’ forms music became popular. In fact, early talkies explore such diverse influences, and *Andaz* (1949) etc., incorporate the visual meaning of piano within its diegesis. Surely, by 1950s a set pattern for ‘sad’ and ‘happy’ music became dominant, however, deviations as in *Pyassa* (1957), *Bandini* (1963) etc., are not necessarily rare instances.

Writing about the ideology of Hindi cinemas, Prasad (1998) describes the films of 1970-1980s as the ‘aesthetic of mobilization’. In this paper, I re-read this problem of ‘mobilization’ through the sound track. In fact, piano used in 1950s-1960s seems transforms into guitar in 1970s-80s, re-positing ‘the dispossessed’ as it were, within the soundscape. For instance, *Disco Dancer* (1982) maps emergent sound patterns, which were connected to problems of youth, gender, exuberance, anger, and the burgeoning cassette industry. In this paper, I examine the question of musical ‘eclecticism’ and shifting cultural contexts of Hindi film music in the 1970s and 1980s.