



# The Sacred and the Cinema: Reconfiguring the 'Genuinely' Religious Film

*Sheila J. Nayar*

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For more than half a century now, scholars have debated over what comprises a 'genuinely' religious film—one that evinces an 'authentic' manifestation of the sacred. Often these scholars do so by pitting the 'successful' films against those which propagate an inauthentic spiritual experience—with the biblical spectacular serving as their most notorious candidate. This book argues that what makes a filmic manifestation of the sacred true or authentic may say more about a spectator or critic's particular way of knowing, as influenced by alphabetic literacy, than it does about the aesthetic or philosophical—and sometimes even faith-based—dimensions of the sacred onscreen. Engaging with everything from Hollywood religious spectacles, Hindu mythologicals, and an international array of films revered for their 'transcendental style,' *The Sacred and the Cinema* unveils the epistemic pressures at the heart of engaging with the sacred onscreen. The book also provides a valuable summation of the history of the sacred as a field of study, particularly as that field intersects with film.

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