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Movie Adaptation of Literary Works in Hindi Cinema

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People love stories either in written, oral or pictorial form. The wall paintings, folktales and literature are the proof of the fact that medium to present a story has changed from time to time but the need for telling story and listening to it has not changed. Our ancestors used myths, legends and folktales to educate the people and inculcate good moral conduct among them. These stories were the record of the life, culture and customs of the people they belong to. They were passed on to the next generation orally. We still pass them on to our children though the medium has changed. Now we have books and animated films to acquaint them with not only our culture and tradition but with the other cultures too. Earlier children knew stories of *Panchtantara*, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* but now they are also aware of the stories of Snowwhite, Sleeping Beauty and Cinderella. What made the exposure of these stories from other culture to the larger world possible? Technology is the answer and film as one of these medium used to reach to the people of all cultures, classes and creeds. Now the time has come to accept films as one of the medium to tell a story and to break the tradition of having a story in black and white. With movie adaptation of literary work the story can be presented incorporating colours, sound and visual effects. Moreover, movie adaptations of novels have many advantages. In the age of technology where the young generation learns philosophy, morals and good conduct from What's App, SMS they naturally get attracted towards films. The literary field has also not remained untouched by the effects and advantages of technology. Like music, literature, paintings and other arts, films have also become one of the media to capture life and culture of new age. Besides, films have also revived the interest of the youngsters in reading books. This has helped not only the writers but also the viewers. When a book is rendered into a movie, its message reaches to even those who refrain from reading. Here I would like to present an example of Chetan Bhagat's novels. The rendering of his novels into films has made him a very popular and successful writer. There has been seen increase in rate of the viewership of the films as well as in the readership of his novels also.

Even after the commercial success of this trend of adapting literary work into movie the debate over adaptations have raised many issues that have been a prime concern for the critics. "The literary enthusiasts ...on one side proclaiming it impossible to adapt a novel into intense rigor or rife with meaning into a film, particularly a commercial film-and the film scholars on the other side claiming how well a film can translate a novel, of any quality, especially those of the best quality, into an artistic masterpiece"(Snyder, 244). The debate is endless as both the forms have positive and negative aspects but the aim of this article is to show how Hindi films have adapted itself with adaption of literary work and what limitations and liberties are there in the way of adaptation of books.

The trend of rendering a literary piece into a film started with the advent of new art- the films. Movie adaptation is not a new thing .The first Hindi film by Dadasaheb Falke *Raja Harishchandra* was based on a story from Indian epic the *Mahabharata*. Then there is a host of authors whose novels have been transformed into movie. R.K. Naryan’s *Guide*, *Devadas* of Sharatchandra Chattopadhyaya and, Amrita Pritam’s *Pinjar* are few of them. Recently, there has been seen a revival of the popular trend to adapt popular novels into films in Hindi cinema too.

Shakespeare also did the same thing he found stories from different sources and converted them into plays. This transformation from one genre to another helps ‘a good story’ to have ‘a good form’ of representation. Critics of film adaptation condemn this practice and try to prove superiority of books over films. Many critics are of the view that by movie adaptations ‘they are condescending from the act of reading to the act of watching a film, to then a “lesser” art form.’ (A Critical History of Film Adaptation) And so they have expressed their preference for the traditional experience for book reading. “New aesthetic ideas as well as technological innovations might make a film more interesting or more marketable, but it does not necessarily make it better. Thus novels and film adaptations should be evaluated on their unique attributes.” (A Critical History of Film Adaptation) his attitude developed because literature has been established as a discipline for centuries while film is a recently acknowledged discipline it is true that novel form is older and film is a younger form of expression but it is rapidly acquiring popularity among people and critics alike.

However as against this, there has been put up an argument that movie adaptation makes the presentation of the book better. “Novels aren’t considered higher art than film by everyone, and intelligent, informed individuals do exist outside the walls of academia who appreciate film as a text as much as they do a novel.” (Snyper, 239) In India also due to the similarities in functions of both the forms the approach of looking at films as an intelligent visual text has come up from film loving people.

In the hundred years of Hindi cinema many literary works of renowned writers from Hindi, regional languages and English have been taken up for movie adaptation. They were rendered so artistically that mostly all of them are still in the list of block buster films. Some may argue that an adaptation of a well knit novel into a film makes it successful on the screen but there are some instances where we can see that the novel was not so successful yet the film did well on the box-office. *Shatranj Ke Khiladi* was an adaptation from Munshi Premchand’s novel with the same title. Novels of Gulzarilal Nanda became the source for many Hindi movies of 60s and 70s. From Bengali novels, *Devdas* and *Parineeti*, of Sharat Chandra Chattopadhyay have been shaped into movies by film directors. Govardhanram Tripathi’s famous Gujarati novel *Sarswatichandra* was rendered into film by the director Govind Saraiya in 1968. It is not that filmmakers have resorted to Indian fiction for movie adaptation only. Many plays and novels from English literature are also used for making movies. Film *Tere Mere Sapne* (1971) was based on the novel *The Citadel* by A.J.Cronin. *7 Khoon Maaf* (2011) and *The Blue Umbrella*

(2005) are movie adaptations of Ruskin Bond's short story 'Susanna's Seven Husbands' and a novel *The Blue Umbrella* respectively.

Recently, the trend of borrowing extensively from novels, plays and short stories has again come into prominence. In 2008, *The New York Times* cited Bhagat as "the biggest selling English language novelist in India's history". Times magazine named him as one of the 100 most influential people. Chetan Bhagat the most popular and renowned writer gives credit of his success to films. In his interview with NDTV, he said, "I like to reach more Indians, and movies help me do so. The bigger the audience I have, the more likely they are to read my non-fiction columns on national issues or be interested in my views. Movies help me do that." Out of Chetan Bhagat's five novels, four have been rendered into movies: *Five Point Someone* into *3 Idiots* (2009), *One Night @ the Call Center* into *Hello* (2008), *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* into *Kai Po Che* (2013), *2 States* (2014) by the same name.

Here we find two approaches with respect to the adaptation: the one in which the story is presented without making changes into its original text. In this first approach the filmmaker adheres to the original text in every respect; the plot, characters dialogues and so on. Here some modification is required to make it acceptable to Indian culture but when a literary work gets translated into a movie the filmmaker remains faithful to the text. While discussing movie adaptations, a question of fidelity and betrayal to the text comes in. He must be aware of the fact that the viewers will scrutinize it minutely and they will find out details that betray the original text. Sometimes there are possibilities that due to its condensed form film cannot justify the contents of the book properly. It tends to omit certain details. This leads to the poor quality of adaptation sometime. That is why "Adaptations were seen by most critics as inferior to the adapted texts, as "minor", "subsidiary", "derivative" or "secondary" products, lacking the symbolic richness of the books and missing their spirit." (Linda, xii-xiii)(qut.in. Malgorzata, 59). This should not be taken by the viewers as betrayal to the text.

To the problem of betrayal, a satisfactory explanation has been given in Malgorzata's article by referring to Linda Hutcheon from her book *Theory of Adaptation*. Here she raises a question 'Why anyone would agree to adapt a work, knowing their efforts would likely to be scorned as secondary and inferior to the adapted text or to the audience's own imagined versions?' and then she explains "the appeal of adaptations lies in their mixture of repetition and differences, of familiarity and novelty." The viewers draw pleasure from the visuals of what they had read and known however this repetition must bring in some novelty. The story of *Two States* which is an adaptation of Chetan Bhagat's novel *Two States*, is very common. It has become everyday affair in our society where caste biases still exist even in educated families. The message here is to eradicate caste differences by building a bridge of love. The author perceives love-marriage as a remedy for many problems in our society. The presentation of the story has been done with admirable expertise. The music, songs as substitute for dialogues and expressions, favourite stars enacting the story not only add an element of novelty to the known story but also make the movie interesting and enjoyable. When viewers go to see the adaptation

they try to find out how closely the adaptation remains faithful to the text whereas the filmmaker does adaptation to have the pleasure of sharing the aesthetic experience with the writer. But here movie adaptation stands one drawback also. When the creator adheres to the original text too much the adaptation becomes dull and fails to appeal contemporary sensitivities. A creator should also try to bring in some freshness in the known text.

For this reason, the new generation filmmakers have adopted a new approach to the literature from the past. They take a story line from the text and modify them to suit the present condition. This is the second approach to movie adaptation. Vishal Bhardwaj made trilogy of Shakespearian tragedies *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *Hemlet* : *Omkaara* (2006), *Maqbool* (2003), *Haider* (2014) respectively. *Haider* is an excellent display of an artistry of Vishal Bharadwaj. The film has the story of *Hemlet* but it is modified a lot to cope up with recent time. It is set in Kashmir during 1995 when the army used to arrest suspects randomly and inflict torture on them. *Haider* (played by Shahid Kapoor) finds that his father who was a doctor, has been taken away by the army as he had helped an injured militant out of his sense of duty. He returns home to find his missing father. He is shattered to see his house blown up. The more painful fact for him is the growing affinity between his mother and his paternal uncle. This becomes the reason for his melancholy. Like *Helmet*, *Haider* disapproves his mother's relationship. To find out his missing father becomes the sole aim of his life for that he even joins a militant group. He fails to find his father but discovers the fact that it was his uncle who had informed the army about the militant in the house and misguided the army by proving that the doctor had connection with the militant group. In the process of taking revenge he dies. Story line of *Hemlet* has been creatively worked out by Vishal. This new approach should not be interpreted as betrayal. But it is a creative approach of "intertextuality" i.e. adaptations are now being analysed as products of artistic creativity "caught up in the ongoing whirl of intertextual transformation, of texts generating other texts in an endless process of recycling, transformation, and transmutation, with no clear point of origin" (Robert Stam, qut.in, Malgorzata ,60) Here the film stands as an independent and original vision of the text by the creator because he uses intertextual contexts, interprets them and expresses through the medium of film. However this also poses a chance that 'subjectivity' of the creator may obstruct the objective presentation of the text as he chooses to adapt the book that he liked the most. Foote (qut.in Snyder,203) says: when you're working on something of your own, you call upon a lot of unconscious things that you have been storing up and thinking about...(with someone else's work) a great deal more is conscious, and you have to approach consciously what must have been an unconscious process for the original writer. For an excellent adaptation the filmmaker has to know the 'spirit' of the book thoroughly. A book is a complex construct of latent meanings, signs and symbols, possibilities of open-ended interpretations. There is a fear that filmmaker may fail to incorporate some of these elements or present his interpretation of them. In that case, movie adaptation may restrict the freedom of the spectator. There are possibilities that these elements which are an inseparable part of the book may not get transferred in to another medium. So an in-depth understanding from various aspects is a precondition for movie adaptation. If a filmmaker judges the book with only literary approach,

that is not sufficient. There are many more approaches that he must take into consideration. "Literature like other arts, suggest a vast area of communicative possibilities through which it could speak to the audience...meanings could be seen as events that took place in reader's time and imagination. It was therefore necessary to place the emphases differently, not on the sources but on the way its meanings were constructed in the process of reception. Filmmakers had to be seen as readers with their own rights, and each adaptation-as a result of individual reading process." (Malgorzata, 60) Thus the creator must be very careful while making changes. He has to play a role of a reader of the text as well as a creator of a text- the film. He must take into account reader's response to his work of art and make changes accordingly. The changes should be done in such a way that the ideology of the book should not suffer. If the changes are done with a view to making a film popular and marketable, it will fail to impart the message that the author wanted to give.

By movie adaptation, the creator does a great job for the viewers. When a reader reads a novel, there remain certain gaps in understanding the text because it is not possible for every reader to analyze the subtext, symbols and mystified ideas of the text. The aural, visual presentation helps him to understand the implicit meaning. Sometimes it happens that we cannot read a novel at a stretch so our experience is sporadic and understanding is not clear. When we see a movie we can have the experience in totality. As a result, we can draw more interpretations. E.g. while reading *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* I found it little confusing but when I watched *Kai Po Chhe* the topic is understood properly and could find a new meaning of the title. I could understand which the three mistakes of the protagonist were. Projection of the riot scenes, the horror-stricken faces of the Muslims, the revengeful mob and its brutal acts of killing innocent people have immense effect because all emotions can be visualized. The incident which would have become a piece of news report becomes the most loathsome act of humanity and thus visual impact enhances the emotional experience. Filming of the novel also helps us to see things in new light. I could understand the relation between the phrase 'Kai Po Chhe' and Ahmedabad – the city of kites and riots. During riots the people of both the communities slaughter one another in the same manner as they cut kites on kite flying day. Thus *Kai Po Chhe* becomes a very significant expression here.

The critics who criticize movie adaptation of books raise the problem of perception. According to them when a reader reads a book all the characters, objects and details get reconstructed in the reader's imagination and the reader decodes them in most possible manner. In novels, for instant, description of a living room runs through pages to pages to indicate living style and personality of the character. Simple description of objects in the room has the capacity to reveal everything about the character. In films this is done in one or two shots. Quickly moving images in films take away this opportunity from the spectator. Visualization cannot bring forth the subtleties that words can create in the mind of a reader through interaction with the work. In novels, characters are known through their thoughts and narration done by other characters whereas in film we can see the character and know him through his action, words and

expressions. According to these critics, film is a very short and snappy form to show everything in detail.

To this the following quote can be presented as an argument: Films may be limited in their appeal because of the time constraint involved, as well as the limits to the geographical access and emotional access they have. The information contained in novels is controlled by authors and we see/hear/ read what they want us to, though we may read into the characters, situations and actions according to our own knowledge, experience, and attitudes. On the other hand, even though the auteur of the film is controlling what we see, the scenes are far richer on the screen than in the novel. The driving tension of the film is between the materials of the story and objective nature of the image, and the viewer can participate in the experience much more actively (Bhugra, 7). The major difference between film and book is that visual images stimulate our perception directly, while written words can do this indirectly...(n.p. Adaptation: From Novel to Film) The visual medium offers choices which the written narrative may not. There is a greater freedom in the choices of perspective; the agencies are multiple- camera eye, narrator, lights, use of space, the spoken dialogue, body language, facial expression as well as the silences. There is also the strategic projection of stereotypes (Jasbir,1).

One more aspect that makes movie adaptation very useful for the society should not be ignored. It also becomes a tool in imparting a message to the society in a very entertaining and attractive way. Here I would like to give an example of the movie *3 idiots* which is based on the novel *Five Point Someone* by Chetan Bhagat. This movie is a severe criticism of the present education system and the need to bring change in it by accepting the brilliance and originality of a person. This important message might have lost and had not reached to the larger mass had it not been expressed through the medium of mass communication- the film. The movie created a great impact on the mindset of common people who gave more importance to career than creativity. They were taught to value individuality through this novel as well as the movie. But “The degree of accessibility provided by film, a largely visual medium, is unmatched by other media. The capacity of the medium to animate images imparts a kinetic force to the film, making it possible to communicate at a level usually not possible through the media of books and paintings. Because there is a collaborative effort involved the influence of social, political and cultural factors is far more implicit than would be in the case of a one person effort” (Bhugra 3).

After discussing positive and negative points of both books and films it seems that neither novels nor films are better but both deal with concepts (idea and thoughts) and percepts (recognizable sensations or impression received by the mind through the senses), just as any relational or performative art form does. Also seeing both as text should encourage a reading and rereading/ viewing and reviewing of them, allowing for a conversion of percepts into concepts not only in novels but in films as well (Snyder,205) Novels create pictorial effect through words and films create verbal effect through picture but the ultimate aim of both is to bring story to life in a brilliant way.

Filmmakers have realized that for a good film they need a well-knit plot, effective characters and an interesting story. People are fed up with age old film formula of romance, tragedy action with same old story. They look for some novelty. Novels can provide novelty. Moreover, books are written and read by elite and educated class whereas films can be seen and understood by the illiterate people too. Film watching is not a costly activity even the lower class can afford to watch movie. This reason also makes movie adaptation a desirable activity.

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