

Literature and Cinema

Dr. Shippra

Assistant Professor
Dept. of English
Government Degree College
Babrana, Gunnaur, Sambhal U.P, India

In the past century there were Cinema, television, and computer graphics but now, there are operas transferred to a format of the comic book, a picture which comes to life, a cosplay etc. (Dalton, 2019, Wolff, 2018). the 21st century became the time of creation and development of new synthetic art forms due to the development of science and technology.

Literature has been a way of artistic expression for centuries. Writers have told tales about God and Goddesses, heroes and their fearless victories, comic incidents, historical epics, romantic tragedies etc. Cinema has been doing the same thing for quite a few years now. One major strong point in cinema which is absent in literature is the advantage of visually showing the whole picture on the screen that helps the audience to connect with the movement very closely. The occurrence of cinema in the early 1900s rapidly led to a link between film and literature, the convergence of both the medium becoming especially significant during the early

1930s, and a period that is often referred to as the classic cinematic period. Cinema has taken its place by the 20th century onwards. Though both these arts have certain connections and differences, both have a similarity of taking its readers/audience to a different world. Literature takes its readers on a journey of imagination that is away from the real world while cinema shows such an imaginative world before the audience and they do not have to put much pressure on their minds to delve into their imaginations. Thus, we can say that literature is an art which is developed through writing, while cinema brings those writings to life through sound, music, visuals and actors. Literature has all the meanings hidden in itself that are used to develop in film. Cinema is a form of literature because it combines words, images and sounds and also shares the language of literature. Though both are interdependent, both need to be studied in order to completely understand a movie based on a piece of literature. Brito in 2006 (Quoted in Linda Catarina Gualda : Literature and Cinema 2010) states that, “ In the era of interdisciplinary, nothing is healthier than trying to see the literature’s verbatim from the perspective of cinema and the movie iconicity from the perspective of literature”.

Both cinema and literature are inspired and beneficial to each other. The essential factors which are common in Cinema and Literature are the process of storytelling and portrayal of the events. Although the relationship between film and fiction has been largely beneficial, often resulting in

increased recognition for novels that were previously unpopular, critical study of the convergence has frequently focused on the drawbacks of the adaptive and interpretive partnering. In recent years, the tie- in between literature and cinema has seen an intense and uninterrupted revival. Cinema shares the most with literature in terms of its elementary features such as plot, character, theme, imagery and the ability to play with space and time. In cinema the image combines with word and music, thus heightening the suggestive possibilities. Films may not have pre- decided rules or grammar but like verbal language, by arranging shots in a relational sequence, they narrate a story. Cinema provides the audience with ready-made characters in blood and flesh, and a definite outline of space, while in literature the reader fills in the blanks himself, imagining the space and the characters. When novels use only words counting on the reader's mental picture, cinema gives it all in a plate with an individual interpretation of the novel. films supply a great deal of visual information and facts. They make you see visually through the eye and literature makes you see mentally through the mind. Since, there are more similarities instead of differences between literature and film, we should keep in mind the uniqueness of each medium and look at what they bring to each other. In his essay "Cinema as digest"(1948) Andre Bazin claims that 'cinematic faithfulness to a form, literary or otherwise is illusory: what matters is equivalence in the meaning of the forms'.⁴ If film did not grow out of literature,

it grew towards it; and what novels and films most strikingly have in common is the potential and propensity for narrative'.(Brian McFarlane , *Novel to Film: an introduction to the theory of Adaptation*,1996). Even if a film uses the same language of the novel, yet words are still different. According to Alan Spiegel, “ James Joyce respects the integrity of the seen object.....gives it a palpable presence apart from the presence of the observer”. (Spiegel: *Fiction and the Camera eye, Visual Consciousness in Film and the Modern Novel*, 1976).

Film is a fusion and blend of all the other performance arts. Susan Sontag, an American writer and filmmaker, considers cinema “a kind of pan- art” that absorbs the characteristic features of all the other arts and at the same time there is nothing that it has which is not there in one or another of these arts. Film shares its visual element with painting, its ability to show movement with dance, its potential to move the audience emotionally with music, its dependence on presentation and performance with theater and technological creativity with photography. Thus cinema could be seen as the next step of the ability to narrate stories. Film and literature are profane arts that need time to elucidate. Film appears to be a form of dramatic storytelling but it is actually a form of narrative storytelling like a novel.

In 1928, Kenneth MacPherson wrote, “ The cinema has become so much a habit of thought , word and deed as to make it impossible to visualize modern consciousness without

it". In the same year, the poet Hilda Doolittle claimed that, 'the world of the film today.....is no longer the world of the film, it is the world..... There has never been, perhaps since the days of the Italian Renaissance, so great a "stirring" in the mind and soul of the world consciousness'. George Bernard Shaw also saw the birth of film as a cultural revolution. In 1914 he wrote, "the cinema is a much more momentous invention than printing, was..... The cinema tells its story to the illiterate as well as to the literate; and it keeps its victim not only awake but fascinated as if by a serpent's eye". Literature has always been a great inspiration for cinema all over the world. Several times in India, epics like Mahabharata and Ramayana have been created and recreated on the screen. Novels of famous writers of different languages are used in films every now and then. It can easily be said that the first step of cinema is literature because once a film is in the process of making, it is the script, dialogues and screenplay that are produced in order to develop it. Hence, literature initiated people to move on to cinema. Aladdin, Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves, Hatim Tai, Cinderella, Snow White and The Prince and The Pauper originated and took inspiration from all a world of tales and stories. There have been several filmmakers who have adapted novels, plays, even poetry into films like JK Rowling's Harry Potter series, Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice and Sense and Sensibility, Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay's Devdas, Homer's Iliad and Odyssey.

A film adaptation is the transfer of a work or a story, in whole or in part, to a feature film from one medium to another. Linda Hutcheon in 'A Theory of Adaptation' defines adaptation as an “ announced and extensive transposition of a particular work or works”. (Hutcheon, Linda. A Theory of Adaptation,2006).

The most common form of film adaptation is the use of a novel as the basis. The novels/stories are adapted into movies because we can see the characters come alive and give our imagination a sense of reality. The birth of the first type of interpretation of literary work is film adaptation which falls on 1902, when French director Georges Melies produced the screen version based on the novel 'Robinson Crusoe' by Daniel Defoe. From that moment, the era of using literature by cinema started : “Since the beginning of cinema, adaptations have been a principle of the business of film. Among the earliest films were adaptations of literary works”.(Cartwell,Deborah. A Companion to Literature; Film and Adaptation2012). Nowadays, film adaptations are created on the basis of prose, dramatic art, poetry, songs and the Opera. Their main aim is to transfer the sense of the primary source using “ film language” which significantly differs from literary and each literary work can be interpreted in movies and in different ways. For example, there are about 200 adaptations with Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson as the main characters.

We regard film adaptation as a genre of cinema. The

creator of the film adaptation is a director. He is guided by his own ideas, context of the work, era and consumer

taste. While looking at an adaptation, we should also look at the traditions of cinematic practice at the time, the preoccupations and the collection of the director's and writer's work and the spirit attached to the actors playing the various characters, to understand the narrative better. Some elements of the movie also can be reflected in the literary work when the screen version of one part of the book is being produced simultaneously with the process of writing another part. For example- a series of books about Harry Potter. A good screen version gives the audience a chance to experience what they admired and what touched them in the book once again. It visualizes what they could just imagine earlier and gives the opportunity to fix the unified image. "Nowadays adaptation contributes to 'convergence culture', which involves a circulation and remediation of texts, images, media and messages".(Perdikaki, 2017). Apart from film adaptation there is a screen version based on the work. It is mainly used when the book cannot be transferred to a screen literally. Many movies represent the screen version of literary works. There are a lot of people who think that cinema is a bad influence on text reception (Shatunova et al. 2019). They believe that cinema can kill reading. But at the same time the cinema can help to draw attention to literature; as it allows a large number of people to know about the literary work. Secondly, captions in silent movies were mostly used and in fact it was literature.

Adaptations of classics confirm the fact that novels have widely inspired filmmakers. Since films are made for national/international audiences, adapters make changes in the racial and gender politics of the narrative, restraining it from elements which might hurt the sensibilities of the audience.

D. W. Griffith adapted writers like Tennyson, Browning and Thomas Hardy, but he learnt the complexity of filmmaking from Charles Dickens. Mostly, the works of William Shakespeare and Jane Austen are discussed by adapters. Some of the best known works adapted in Hindi cinema are -

1. Pinjar is based on Amrita Pritam's novel 'Pinjar'.
2. Omkara based on 'Othello' by William Shakespeare.
3. Suraj ka Satavan Ghoda based on 'Suraj ka Satavan Ghoda' by Dharmveer Bharti.
4. Utsav is based on an ancient Sanskrit play called 'Mricchakatika'.
5. Devdas is based on Sharat Chandra Chattopadhyay's novel 'Devdas'.
6. Parineeta is based on another novel by Sharat Chandra chattopadhyay.
7. Maqbool is based on 'Macbeth' by William Shakespeare.
8. Haider based on 'Hamlet' by William Shakespeare.
9. Guide based on RK Narayan's 'Guide'.
10. Aisha was inspired by Jane Austen's novel 'Emma'.
11. Masoom was inspired by Eric Segal's 'Man, Woman

and Child.

12. Fitor was based on Charles Dickens 'The Great Expectations.
13. Looter was based on O Henry's short story 'The Last Leaf'.

Adaptations are often compared and contrasted with translations since both involve interchange from one form into the another. According to John Dryden, translation could be a-

1. 'metaphrase', a word by word and line by line shift from one language to another.

2. 'paraphrase or translation with latitude', where the author is not strictly followed but always kept in mind.

3. 'imitation', where the translator takes great liberties with the word and meaning of the author.

Novels and films represent the world and lives at a large, thus, novels attract a lot of adaptors. Novels and films are both proficient in rendering of the passage of time and location in space.

The adaptor is-

1. The screenwriter who creatively transforms the plot, characters, dialogue and theme.
2. The actor who interprets the characters and colors them with his own understanding.
3. The director who constructs the mise- en- scene.
4. The editor who arranges the pieces together to form one logical portrayal.

Many filmmakers, writers and audiences believe that an adaptation needs to be faithful to its source text and be accurate in its representation of the literary text, historical situation or period.

Novelization plays a large role in promotion of the movie and gains immense popularity and is most often used. Jan Baetens writes, "Again, novelization is obviously a form of adaptation, but it is quite different in semiotic as well as institutional terms from the better known and well studied case of the film adaptation of a literary text. Semiotically speaking, most novelizations are not inter-medial: they do not transform a narrative in a certain medium into another medium, since their source text is not visual, but verbal".(Baetens,2010). Films do not always follow a literary text as they can provide the source text for literature in the form of novelization. Novels, poetry and theater also adopt and adapt cinematographic materials and literary devices as significant thematic and structuring principles. John Edmund Gardner, a British writer best known for his spy fiction novelised two James Bond films. Today it extends the whole film industry. However, many critics and readers treat a novelization genre with some antipathy, regarding it not as full- fledged literature.

Thus, the creation of cinema has brought new consideration as well as new techniques and approaches of the literary text. Cinema is a form of art that synthesizes the distinctive elements of other art such as music, dance,

photography, theater etc. With the emergence of the era of sound, cinema was seen as literature's competitor and created fear and suspicion among the elites. Films have been greatly influenced by literature. Adaptations of classics confirm the fact that the novels have widely inspired filmmakers. It is an example of the complex interaction between literature and cinema. Instead of dispersing films as copies or derivative works, we should see the informative possibilities they create by adding layers and meanings. Literature and cinema have a lot in common and it will be beneficial to look at their engagements with each other.