

Indian Cinema: Reflecting Society through Adaptations from Regional Literature

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Abstract:

Human Expression always needs a pathway to communicate itself to masses. This expression comes from Human Mind and heart affected either positively or negatively by its surrounding environment. While Literature as a written form of communication, has been the finely crafted tapestry from ancient times to 'knit the spontaneous feelings by the Writers, Cinema is considered to be one of the most substantial creations of the nineteenth century and has undoubtedly a mass appeal to the audience due to its audio visual Portrayal of the written expressions. Cinema and Literature are correlated to each other yet they are diverse in their individual ways. Indian literature and cinema have always gone hand in hand, with literature exciting filmmakers to recast the texts into movies. This affiliation gives us the vivid view of socio-cultural, political and economic condition of the nation through which we have evolved. It would not be erroneous to say that literature and cinema incomparably take the human minds through the passages of society be it any century or period. This research paper aims to scrutinize few explicit examples of literature by writers of different regions in India that have been successfully adapted by Indian cinema and presented to mass audience across the nation and abroad.

Keywords: Cinema, Literature, Society, Culture, audience, Expression, adaptation.

Introduction:

Literature is regarded as the mirror that reflects the society. Literature comes into being from the society and merges back in to it again. Literature is a consequential blending or fusion of matter, manner, medium and meaning. There are various genres in the big body of literature, such as Prose, Poetry, Drama, Novel, Short story etc. Further these genres can be classified as literature of power and literature of knowledge, Literature of perusal or reading and Literature of seeing or

viewing. If poetry and other forms are capable of providing pleasure when read, the drama is capable of sanctioning pleasure when read as well as viewed in the form of enactment on the stage.

Bharatamuni, in his 'Natyashastra' says:

“Drama is a lively representation of the nature of the joy and sorrows of this world through gestures and action.”

The west also holds a similar view of drama. According to western theorists “Drama is a lively representation of a story through action depicting the ups and downs that occur in the life of human beings”

In our present times, cinema enjoys an illustrious position among other performing art forms. It is permissible to consider Cinema as a matured structure of drama in every respect. Cinema is considered to be one of the most substantial creations of the nineteenth century and has undoubtedly a mass appeal to the audience due to its audio visual Portrayal of the written expressions. Cinema and Literature are correlated to each other yet they are diverse in their individual ways. Cinema has always aspired to accomplish wider audience globally. The audience may include literate and illiterate, cultured and uncultured, educated, semi educated and even uneducated crowd, with miscellaneous tang collecting under a common ceiling. Therefore, it has the command over the world with one wand and that is the language of cinema. It carries its audience to live the life they are not born into. It takes them to the places they have never ever visited. It triggers emotions which might have never been thought of. Book-to-movie adaptations in India are not merely about translating text to screen; they are about capturing the quintessence of diverse cultures, languages, and regional nuances. Thus Cinema has become an inextricable part of our lives especially in India.

Adaptation of Novels into films and poetry into songs is an artistic transition which facilitates the film makers to dive deep into the society, exploring the social distortions, beliefs superstitions, and defects and reconstructing for the audience the known facts as well as unveil what is hidden, not popular or tabooed.

Pre-Independence literature Adaptations:

Raja Harishchandra (1913) is considered the first Indian film adaptation of a book. It was directed by Dada saheb Phalke who is known as the "father of Indian cinema". It is a mythological story of a Hindu King Harishchandra, from the Sanskrit epics Ramayana and Mahabharata, the 36th king of the Solar Dynasty, who donated his entire kingdom and sold himself and his family to keep the

promise given to the sage Vishvamitra in the dream. The film is based on the mythological story of a Hindu King Harishchandra, the 36th king of the Solar Dynasty, who donated his entire kingdom and sold himself and his family to keep the promise given to the sage Vishvamitra in the dream. The story is also found in other historical books, such as the Aitareya Brahmana, Devi Bhagavata Purana, and Markandeya Purana. The film was also inspired by an Urdu language drama, Harishchandra written by Narain Prasad Betab.

Next in the list comes 'Sewasadanam' (1938) a popular tamil movie that was adapted from the novel 'Seva Sadan', Munshi Premchand's first major novel. It was originally written in Urdu under the title 'Bazaar-e-Husn' but was first published in Hindi from Calcutta as 'Seva Sadan'. The movie is the earliest and most influential drama depicting contemporary issues of the society and the reformist policies. The movie seems to be located firmly in a place — Varanasi — and in time - the turn of the 20th century: when the British Raj started handing over power to local elites through municipalities, in some towns and cities. Vasudha Dalmia, an American academic of South Asian culture points out that the title itself, Seva (service) and Sadanam (house), suggests the many layered social texture of Varanasi. Over the years Premchand's many other masterpieces have been adapted for the silver screen by several well known film makers from Hrishikesh Mukherjee to Satyajit Ray. *Heera Moti* (1959), based on 'Do Bailon Ki Katha', one of the many short stories of Premchand revolves around two bullocks and their importance in the life of a poor farmer. The movie strongly depicts the Zamindaari system, dependence on agriculture, poverty and helplessness of the farmers of those times. A film version of Premchand's novel, *Gaban*, was released in 1966. The movie enacts the diminishing ethical standards among lower middle class Indian youth in the era of British India", and to what extent an individual can plunge to befall a pseudo-elite, and maintain a fake illustration as a wealthy person. Academy Award-winning Bengali filmmaker Satyajit Ray's Hindi language debut film *Shatranj Ke Khiladi* was based on the novel by the same name written by Premchand. The work brilliantly explores the detachment of nawabi classes in 19th century India which led to the British slowly gaining control over the Indian subcontinent. *Oka Oori Katha (A Story of a Village)* is a 1977 Telugu film directed by Mrinal Sen. It is based on the story "Kafan" by Munshi Premchand. The film transports the narrative from the Hindi heartland of Premchand to the rural landscapes of Telangana. It's a forceful makeover of Premchand's story into a influential commentary on rural poverty and social injustice, lauding its unflinching portrayal of the harsh realities faced by the downtrodden and its impassioned appeal to human conscience. Indian film director [Satyen Bose](#) adapted Premchand's "Panch Parmeshwar" into the 1979 film *Saanch Ko Aanch Nahin*. The movie brings forth variety of social issues of

society in 20th century like caste system, untouchability, Poverty and economic inequality, women oppression, corruption and abuse of power, superstition and blind belief, etc. *Godaan* based on Premchand's novel of the same name, was made into a Hindi film in 1962. In 2004, it was part of the 27-episode TV series, *Tehreer.... Munshi Premchand Ki*. It is quite sure that the film somewhere reflected the social reality of lack of humanity, famine, poverty and exploitation of Indian peasantry. The novel underlines the fact that social, religious, economic and political relations in Indian society were governed by the varna-caste system and that though the British were ruling the country, it was the upper castes that wielded the real power on the ground. It also shows how a coalition of upper castes was trying to wrest political power from the hands of the British in the name of Swaraj.

Premchand himself was not averse to cinema. In an age when the new-fangled art was looked down upon, the writer came to Bombay to try his luck. At the invitation of a number of friends, he arrived in the city in 1934 to write for films. He did participate in and write one film, *Mazdoor*, on the life and struggles of unionized workers. Film adaptations of Premchand's novels have not only entertained audiences but also acted as catalysts for social change.

Saratchandra Chatterjee's *Devdas* first published in 1917 has been adopted into films many times. The movie mirrors the life of young but adamant Devdas, ragged between love and societal norms. First adapted into a silent movie in 1928 by Naresh Mitra and then by P C Barua in three versions; Bengali, Hindi and Assamese, this film is applauded as the all-time great classic in Hindi cinema. Sanjay Leela Bansali brought yet another version of the novel in 2002. A post modern version with title *Dev D* was made by Anurag Kashyap in 2009. One can clearly visualize the class and caste differences, impact of societal hierarchism on personal relationships, gender dynamics, and paternal authority shaping destinies.

The movie adaptation of the novel, '*Anandmath*' influential in boosting the spirit of our freedom movement, effectively captured its essence. The film honestly symbolizes the concept of patriotism with its song "Vande Mataram," which became an anthem. *Mother India*, Celebrates Motherhood and womanhood at national and International level by impressively portraying life of a rural woman making sacrifices against poverty and social evils every moment for the sake of her children. *Chokher Bali (1938)* directed by Satu Sen, was the first film adaptation of the novel of the same name by Rabindranath Tagore. It was again screen played at cinemas in 2003. The movie depicts the rigid Bengali society of 19th century where young widows were forced to live

struggling, miserable life. We can visualize a patriarchal social order depriving females from their right to existence under the grey shades of marriage and societal norms related to it.

Post Independence literature Adaptations:

Some prominent Indian novels written after independence that have been adapted into films emphasize themes of patriotism and nationalism, especially the revolt against the British empire. Many of these novels walk around themes of post-independence social issues, class struggles and cultural complexities. Quite a lot of adaptations are based on regional Indian literature, capturing the tinge of precise cultures.

The *Guide* (1965) is a Hindi and English film adaptation of R.K. Narayan's (1958) novel of the same name. The plot is shifted from Malgudi in south to Udaipur in Rajasthan. The film courageously presents the taboo subject of extra-marital relationship when infidelity was considered a forbidden subject in our country. The novel *Parineeta* by Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay has been adapted into several films and a web series by celebrated film maker Bimal Roy to Pradeep Sarkar. The cinematic show of the novel enables the audience to time travel at the turn of the 20th century during the Bengal Renaissance and envision the ideal combination of 'tradition' and 'modernity in the British era. *Pinjar* (2003) is a historical drama film based on a Punjabi novel of the same name, written by Amrita Pritam directed by Chandraprakash Dwivedi. The film revolves around the Hindu-Muslim problems during the partition of India. *Pinjar* portrays the agony of riots, abduction, trauma and symbolic reunion of victims and victimizers in the prophetic hope of communal harmony. One of the most anticipated adaptations of its time, especially being writer Khushwant Singh's most acclaimed work, *Train to Pakistan* is a grim story of individuals and communities caught into the whirlpool of the partition of undivided India into two states in 1947.

The Namesake (2006), English-language drama film directed by Mira Nair based on the novel by same name by [Jhumpa Lahiri](#). This story is about identity and cultural conflict filmed on screen by Mira Nair. The film explores the life of an Indian-American family and their thrash with cross-cultural experiences. *Calling Sehmat* (2008), a novel by Harinder Sikka, was adapted into the 2018 Hindi-language film *Raazi*. The story is set before the 1971 Indo-Pakistani War depicting the ideology of 'Nation before self'. We can see the cultural, political and social influences of Kashmir and Pakistan, Patriotism of the people and hardships of a woman for the sake of her country.

Chetan Bhagat, one of the most influential novelist of contemporary times, his novels *Five Point Someone*, *2 States: The story of My Marriage*, *3 Mistakes of my life*, *Half girlfriend and Revolution*

2020 have been taken up by Bollywood film makers to make movies *3 Idiots*, *2 States*, *Kai Po Che*, *Half Girlfriend* and *Revolution 2020* respectively. *3 Idiots* deals with the complication and unheard challenges of the prestigious educational institutes in India. *One Night @ Call Center* published in 2005 and adapted as movie *'Hello'*, deals with the contemporary issues like urbanization and metropolitan lives. This novel depicts the aggressive situations of lives of people working in call centres. They have become modern in their viewpoint but still struggling in their conventional beliefs and approach inwardly. *Kai Po Che* is a touching delineation of how life gets affected after the disastrous earthquake in Bhuj in the year 2001. *2 States* deals with inter-state marriage conditions in India in the course of the humor and the complexities of Indian marriage system.

Conclusion:

Consequently, it can be said that Literature and film are the sides of the same coin. Undoubtedly both have some similarities and linkages on one hand and differences on the other. Both have a power of transporting its readers/audience to a different world. Where films are based on literature and literature on society, even fiction and society capture from cinema. Both mirror each other in all walks of life.

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