

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CINEMATIC TEXT VIS-À-VIS LITERARY TEXT

Miss. Priyanka Sureshkumar Vaishnav

Student

Shree Siddhivinayak Arts & Commerce Mahila Mahavidyalaya

Email Id: Priyankavaishnav739@gmail.com

Abstract

Adaptation can be seen as an interaction between a 'cinematic text' and a well-constructed 'original text'. Adaptation of literary text is significant as it helps revisit the written form and reaches wider audience. In reworking of the text, the dialogues are revised and reframed with an altered script while the narrative becomes consistent. Cinematic adaptations have proved to be an effective media of transporting meaning across cultures as they assist in reliving the text, making it a more inclusive enquiry. Likewise, the present paper is a comparative study of Deepa Mehta's *Water* (2005) and Bapsi Sidhwa's novel and focuses upon the experiences and challenges faced by widow in an Indian society. Deviating from the stereotypical connotations and patriarchal inhibitions, it emphasizes upon the desires of widows as an individual adding new facet to the time-tested aura.

Keywords: Adaptation; Cinematic text; Literary Text; Media.

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Introduction

Literary adaptation is the adapting of a literary source as in a novel, short story, poem or any text) to another genre or medium, such as a video game, stage play, or film. It can also involve adapting the same literary work in the same genre or medium just for different purposes, e.g., to work with a smaller cast, in a smaller venue (as in on road), or for a different demographic group (such as adapting a story for children). Sometimes the editing of these works can lead to copyright issues. It also develops the interest in the audience because it obviously works as a story; it has interesting characters, who speak and act in interesting ways. This is particularly important while adapting to a dramatic work, e.g., film, stage play, teleplay, as dramatic writing is some of the most difficult. To get an original story to function well on all the essential dimensions—concept, character, story, dialogue, and action—is an extremely rare event performed by a rare talent. Perhaps, most importantly, especially for producers of the screen and stage, an adapted work is more profitable; it represents considerably less risk to investors, and it gives rise to the possibilities of huge financial gains. This is because, it has already attracted audience, it clearly works as a literary piece in appealing to a broad group of people who care, its title, author, characters, etc. may be a franchise.

According Linda Hutcheon, adaptations are interpretive and creative acts that retain the aura of the adapted text

and contain within them a palimpsestic doubleness. They are "deliberate, announced, and extended revisitations of prior works" (Hutcheon 2006, xiv), not replications or reproductions, but rather repetitions with variation. She also discusses adaptation as not only a product, but also a process of interaction and negotiation with the adapted text. Hutcheon defines three modes of engagement that serve as the basis for much of her discussion: "telling", "showing", and "interactive" modes. These three modes are then described in terms of "forms"-by which she means genres such as musical theatre, film, video games, and so on - that represent and transfer expression from one mode to another. Adaptive expectations are met because each genre has a set of conventions that make it unique. Each genre therefore, deals in different ways with artistic devices such as point of view, interiority/exteriority, time and tense, ambiguity, irony, symbols, and silence.

Hutcheon discusses adaptation in two ways: as a product and as a process, as a product, adaptation cannot remain entirely faithful to its original text, otherwise questions of plagiarism arise; adaptation must differ enough from the original text while still maintaining the source's basic ideas. Hutcheon compares adaptation to language, stating that translations can never be literal because they are taken out of the context of their original language and therefore the primary source has authority and authenticity. Adaptation as a process becomes an act of appropriating while trying to give new meaning to a text. Therefore, novelty gives adaptation its value. Adaptations are intertextual and become part of the public history of a story. As a result, all previous adaptations become part of our understanding of all later adaptations. She draws upon the familiar journalistic questions, each of which is used to define and map a part of the total field she examines: What? (Forms), Who? Why? (Adapters), How? (Audiences), Where? When? (Contexts).

"A widow should be long suffering until death, self-restrained and chaste. A virtuous wife who remains chaste when her husband has died goes to heaven. A woman who is unfaithful to her husband is reborn in the womb of a jackal."

-The Laws of Manu, Chapter 5, Verse 156-161, Dharmashastras

Deepa Mehta's *Water* (2005) is set in Banaras (Varanasi), in the pre-independent India of 1938. The production for *Water* was shut down in 2000 when protestors destroyed the sets the night before shooting began. Mehta had to relocate production from the banks of the Ganges in India to Pakistan and the film could not commence shooting until 2005. *Water* movie was banned, it shows that people were against the movie because the film exposes the reality of poor widows and cruelty towards them.

The Manusmriti, an ancient Hindu text, says that a woman is half her husband and if he dies, she is half-dead. A widow has three choices, she can throw herself on his funeral pyre and die with him, she can marry her brother-in-law if family permits or she can live out the rest of her days in isolation and devotion. If she chooses the last option, the path of an ascetic lifestyle, she has to reside in an ashram, shaves her head, 'sacrifices' her desires, wears a white sari as a sign of mourning, and seeks atonement for her husband's death. In the film, Chuhya is a protagonist who is seen at the beginning of the movie, she is an adorable eight-year-old, who has just been widowed. She doesn't even remember her wedding. The little girl's head is shaved, and she is dressed in a white robe. Her father takes her to a decrepit ashram which is located in Banaras, the widows of all ages live there. She sleeps on a thin mat in a room along with old and weak women, who have faced the renunciation all their lives

after becoming widows. They chant religious hymns every day and beg for money on the streets. People believed that widow women are impure and like the plague as it was a commonly held belief that if someone accidentally into a touch of the widow, they will be polluted and must do rituals of purification.

Chuhiya hopes to return to her home. She hopes that one day her mother will come to take her back. Madhumati, the informal in charge, tells Chuhiya not to feel pain as she is half-dead because her husband had died. Ironically, she could be seen crying over the death of her beloved pet parrot.

Shakuntala (Seema Biswas) is a respected Brahmin woman in the Ashram. She's a devoted woman but her 'devotion' failed to provide her 'salvation'. Shakuntala has a pivotal role in the whole movie. She questions the foundations of the theory of widowhood. It is Narayan, a follower of Gandhi, who provides the best explanation for the ancient practice:

"One less mouth to feed, four less saris, fewer a free corner in the house. Disguised as religion, it's just about money." (Water movie (1:38:00-1:38:30))

Shakuntala emerges from being a devotee and a woman of faith to a woman who starts questioning the blind traditions and emancipates Bua is an old widow who keeps reminiscing about her wedding day – not for her parents or her husband but for the lavish meal, especially the laddoos she had that day for the last time. She tells Chuhiya, "Life is so disappointing." Bua dies the very day she eats a laddoo given to her by Chuhiya. Saddened by Bua's death and also frightened as Bua committed a sin by eating laddoo, she tells everything to Shakuntala, to which Shakuntala replies "Don't worry. Bua will go to heaven after eating the laddoo. And if God wills, she will be born as a man in her next life."

Shankuntala questions priest *"you've read dharshastras do really there is written in it that should do bad behaviour towards widows?" (1:22:23-1:22:37)*

Priest says *"according to dharma shastra; widows have only three paths either become sati or sacrifice the mohamaya and the last option if the family permits, they can marry their dead husband's younger brother..... but according to new law act, they can remarry." (1:22:39-1:23:26)*

Shankuntala replies... *"kanun? then why don't we know?" (1:23:28)*

Priest replies *"the things which are not benefits to us, we don't know them, if we know them, we don't recognize it." (1:23:29-1:23:44)*

The scene delineates those widows are ignorant, and the Shankuntala is strong protagonist of the story she is the symbol of awareness and awakening.

Chuhiya meets Kalyani (Lisa Ray), who unlike other widows has long hair for a disturbing reason. Chuhiya and Kalyani become close friends. Kalyani is a young beautiful widow with hope in her heart. She meets Narayan (John Abraham), who is a fresh law graduate and the follower Gandhism. The movie revolves around their unusual love story with a tragic end.

Gulaabi is a transgender procurer played extraordinarily by Raghubir Yadav. A transgender person working as a pimp depicts the harsh reality of a trans person's life. It also compels us to ask ourselves how little transgender people's lives have changed in the last century with sex work and begging has remained being their employment. Casteism is also showcased in the entire movie. Even among widows, Brahmin widows were given prominence

and respect. It was believed that Brahmin men can sleep with whomever they want and the women they sleep with are “blessed”.

It is relevant to mention that Water has some strong men who play crucial role in the movie. Narayan who questions the status, Guru (Kulbhushan Kharbanda) who informs Shakuntala about the law on widow remarriage that nudged her to support Kalyani to remarry, and of course, Gandhi.

Water explores how religion is used as a tool to manipulate and exploit an entire class of women and the way patriarchal imperatives inform religious belief. And how in a patriarchal setup, scriptures are interpreted in favor of men and the privileged class of society.

Water beautifully captures female relationships. It teaches how traditions and rituals should be questioned from time to time. Though the movie revolves around the love story of Kalyani and Narayan, the soul of the movie remains Shakuntala’s awakening, her inner struggle between faith and conscience. The movie ends with Shakuntala’s act of bravery instilling hope and optimism in the viewers.

Bapsi's novel is very faithful to Deepa’s film. She also adapted the title of the movie “water” as the title of the novel. The Novel and the film both deals with the reality of widows in 1930s, both the text is set in 1938, when India was still under the colonial rule of the British, common setting in the ashram in the Banaras. Novel portrays the reality of widow’s asexual life, Sidhwa focuses on the sexuality of widows in her novel. The film deals with the problematic theme of love and remarriage, and spiritual awakening but Sidhwa focuses more on the forbidden theme of widow's sexuality in a variety of ways.

In the beginning of novel, Chuhia is considered to be burden towards his father Somnath. She is not considered equal to her brother prasad and Mohan. It can be seen the difference the way Bapsi has added the characters of Chuhia's siblings and father and her in-laws.

"A girl is destined to leave her parents' home early or she will bring disgrace to it" (14)

"A girl carried within her the seeds of dishonor, and burden of responsibility was to be borne by her parents until she was married" (15)

Inequality between men and women, in tradition men are given more importance and the life is considered more valuable than women's life. Also, how widows are not allowed to remarry but widowers are:

"Outside of marriage the wife has no recognized existence in our tradition. A woman's role in life is to get married and have sons. That is why she is created: to have sons! That is all" (15)

"Didi, where is the house for the men widows?"

There was a stunned silence. Then pandemonium broke out. A chorus of scolding erupted from the shocked widows: "Good God" "What a horrible thing to say" "God protect our men from such a fate!" "May your tongue burn!" (98)

Lack of women's rights

Throughout the novel, Women don't have a say in a lot of matters. They are constantly treated liked servants to men

"a woman is recognized as a person only when she is one with her husband" (15)

In the beginning of the novel, Bhagya is against Chuhia's marriage and she fights against her husband Somnath

but in the end her opinion is not even considered. She is not given the chance to voice her opinion.

Sidhwa also gives a voice to a child widow's mother (Chuiya's mother), who is absent from the film, thus creating a mother-and-daughter narrative, and she adds stories of some widows' pasts, which are impressive in their vividness, as they help us feel their individuality before they become widows. We can also see how the widow's sexuality is abused through the story of the assaults.

Madhumati suffers after her husband's death. She is raped by her brother-in-law for a week, and "shorn and beaten and taken twenty miles into the wilderness and discarded!" (70).

Gulabi finds her "covered in blood and half-dead from starvation, lying in a ditch on the edge of the forest" (70). With the help of the head of the ashram, Madhumati aborts "the foetus resulting from rape," but after two weeks she is taken to a "client" (71).

Deepa Mehta and Bapsi Sidhwa have tried to expose the cruel reality of the tragedy of widowhood in different ways. While they focus on the suppressed widows, both daringly deals with this taboo theme of widows' sexuality than the other writers. The widow is forced to live as an asexual being and cursed.

The widow's untouchable body is, according to Narayan's father, "blessed" when she sleeps with a Brahmin man. Thus, his infidelity and desire for the tabooed body are justified from both social and religious perspectives.

Conclusion: Literary text and film have always been taken to be of a similar kind since both 'narrate a story'. Nevertheless, the differences are obvious; film is a visual art. The similarities between the two are obvious. They both present stories and introduce characters. They take us to worlds created by the writer that are fascinating and new. Novels and films generally have a beginning, middle and end. Following both works; the audience of the novel and the film are different. As in only literate people can read the literary text. The film has a broader audience and it also includes an illiterate audience. A novel tells more descriptive stories and strikes the imagination but it has a limited audience and the sound and visuals of the film could greatly enhance the audiences' comprehension. The film audiences could receive the information from both images and sounds, while the novel readers only from the text. The novel could only describe things through words. The film has a larger audience, because the film is broadcasted in wider areas or all societies, we can say that film is more impactful to make changes in held wrong beliefs in the society.

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