



National Conference on Advances in Engineering and Applied Science (NCAEAS)

29<sup>th</sup> January 2018

Organized by : Anjuman College of Engineering and Technology (ACET) Nagpur,

Maharashtra, India, In association with

International Journal of Scientific Research in Science and Technology



## “Synergy between Films and Literature”

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### ABSTRACT

The present paper aims here to bring forward the synergy between films and literature. Do movies based on popular books increase the popularity of the author and do popular books make popular movies? Is there a symbiosis between the popularity of the film and popularity of the author? Literature is an aspect of popular culture which has immense power to establish a grip on the people’s mind and is perhaps one of the oldest forms of entertainment. Film makers adapt scripts from literature to recreate and add new freshness to the already existing world. More over the audience is drawn to the cinematic adaptation due to the possible opportunity offered by the film, to see and hear what they have thought and imagined while reading the book. It may be implied that successful movies reflect on literary longevity.

**Keywords:** synergy, films, literature, authors, film makers, symbiosis, entertainment, cinematic adaptation, literary longevity.

### I. INTRODUCTION

**“The study of literature casts light on the meanings in the film and the study of the film can illuminate the full value of literature”**

Ronald Perrier

Films and literature are forms of art designed to empower each other. Over the years great literature has influenced film makers all over the world. Time is witness to adaptations of books into cinema and the concept is nothing new for our Indian film industry. We have seen that from the Shakespeare to Ruskin Bond, Indian cinema has been influenced by popular books, which have ignited the minds of film makers.

Literature has a long standing and important element of popular culture, and has been closely integrated and adapted into films. The kind of

relationship that exists between films and literature is one of the most occupied concepts by the theorist, critics and even the ordinary film goer. Literary adaptations into films invite us to discover their relationship and explore the various issues. The effort here is to bring forth the synergy between films and literature, movies based on popular books – do they increase the popularity of writer and do popular books make popular movies. Is there a symbiosis between the popularity of films and the popularity of the author?

### II. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE SYNERGY BETWEEN FILMS AND LITERATURE

It has been observed that by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that, there was a definite shift from ‘telling’ to ‘showing’ and the visual media started gaining

popularity in the various countries. Films have a more direct sensory experience as compare to reading.

Let us see what lures the film makers towards literature. Generally, it is the strong urge to recreate and add new freshness to the already familiar world. Moreover, the audience is drawn to the adaption due to the possible opportunity offered by the film, to see and hear what they have thought and imagined while reading their favorite book. Moreover, fascinated by a writers creation, film makers find it alluring in sharing the creative experience of the author and the curiosity to learn that how an aesthetic work can be transformed into cinematic medium.

Relevant here are the remarks that, “Film adaptation in a way blurs the boundaries between different media. The complexity of a literary work represents a great challenge to every reader because the world it evokes is an open-ended world that is left to be completed in the process of reading. The readers create their own private ideas about this world by piecing together fragmentary visions of both the directly articulated and indirectly suggested parts. An adaptation invites the viewers to discuss not only the film itself but also their private readings of the adapted text, for it gives them an opportunity to see how the cinematically active readers have responded to the book. When we watch the film, our private form of filling in the gaps is revitalized by the confrontation with the way another creative mind has filled in the same gaps. We become part of an interpersonal artistic communication which is very rewarding because it allows us to get insight into an artist’s creative mind and through this creative mind to the literary work. This combines the pleasure in exploring the literary text through the lenses of an artist with the pleasure in

participating in the inner world of that artist. We are interested in the way the authors of the film respond to the significant parts of the literary work, how they transform the relations between the characters, structures and objects, how they mold the characters, how they add richness to their portrait, how they reconstruct the latent subtexts and how they shape visually and aurally all that lies beneath the surface.”[MALGORZATA MARCINIAK THE APPEAL OF LITERATURE OF FILM ADAPTATION]

The reason for a cinematic adaptation to be more enjoyable is that it combines the abstract world of a literary text with images and sounds and brings literature back to its original unity of spoken word assisted by music and accompanied by the physical presence of the performers. This bodily presence of a human being seems to attract more forcefully to our senses and is the starting point of another sort of pleasure – the fascination with the performing artist.

These factors contribute to develop a symbiotic relationship between films and literatures or to say film makers and authors. Moreover, ordinary filmgoers are more attracted to the cinematic medium may be because it takes longer time to read a book than to watch a movie. Besides books require us to translate written words to mental images, where as movies instantly present out those images assisted by sounds, visuals emotions exploding around us. The end results though much the same... catharsis comfort escapism and entertainment.

A significant remark here is, “Literature is an aspect of popular culture which is widely regarded as having immense power to establish a grip on an individual’s mind, owing to its ability of triggering off curiosity and a film expertise in the art of

storytelling. It's also one of the first modes of Entertainment that was made available to the society, which later transformed into means of preserving history and cultural heritage of a civilization. Literature grew in its influence on the masses, as it moved from fiction to nonfiction. More realistic fiction evolved to become a mirror for the society that portrayed reality more visually. Whether it was a more colorful, darker, a stinging portrayal of existing realities, or a way to neutralize the bitterness with art, literature has been the instrument of the best story tellers." **[LITERATURE IN HINDI CINEMA LOST IN TRANSLATION]**

It may be noted that, most of the Indian population would not be able to appreciate Shakespeare's work because they are not oriented with the British literature. In the same way, not everybody can appreciate the lyrics of Bohemian Rhapsody and the beautifully executed ballad and the brilliant guitars solo. Some people need a Florida or Pitbull to make music that they can groove to when in a club. In short, there will always be a wide spectrum of writers with appeal to various segments of the consumers market. Chetan Bhagat appeals to the majority of Indian youth owing to his simplistic writing and choice of subjects. He has spawned a generation of readers.

Relevant here are the remarks of Purvi Thaker, in her scholarly paper, "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."

"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) this 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." **[MOVIE ADAPTATION OF LITERARY WORKS IN HINDI CINEMA]**

Even in the Indian cinema, movie adaptation is not a new concept. The first Hindi film by Dadasaheb Falke Raja, Harish Chandrawas based on a story from Indian epic the Mahabharata. Besides 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 English novels into films in Hindi cinema too.

This trend again is becoming popular. 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. Vishal Bhardwaj's trilogy.. Maqbool, Omkara and Haider adapted from the plays of William Shakespeare- Macbeth, Othello, Hamlet has attracted the Indian readers to the classics of Shakespeare. The list of adaptations is elaborate. Movies based on Jhumpa Lahiri's- Namesake or on the novel Emma have attracted the common readers to the book as well. The recently released movie "Jungle Book" has enticed the kids to read the original book.

Royalties from her adaptations have helped make Harry Potter author J.K Rowling the second richest women in entertainment, as well as the richest author in history. Whenever a book is transformed into a movie its message reaches to even those who refrain from reading. Take the 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.

Purvi Thaker puts "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 Che 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."

"Classic novels deep on publisher's backlists often have second lives when Hollywood admirers bring them back to the public's attention. Take Far From the Madding Crowd— Thomas Hardy's breakout novel is more than 140 years old, but it recently got fresh play in bookstores thanks to the charming new movie starring Carey Mulligan based on Hardy's story of Bathsheba Everdene and her various suitors. Once a book enters the public domain, which can vary depending on when it was written but is often about 70 years after the death of the author, anyone can publish an edition. That's why a book like Far From the Madding Crowd has more than a dozen editions. On the other hand, newer books are usually protected by copyright, so only one publisher has permission to print them." **[HOW MOVIES GIVE NEW LIFE TO OLD CLASSIC]**

I refer to an article which observes that, On Friday, the movie The Maze Runner hits theaters. The big-screen version has been adapted from a book of the

same title, written by James Dashner in 2007. Thanks to the movie—and perhaps contrary to what you might think—kids all over the United States are picking the book up before they see the film. According to data from Renaissance Learning more than 10,000 students read *The Maze Runner* last May, compared with fewer than 3,000 in 2011 when the movie deal was announced. It turns out that movie releases do in fact spur kids to read the books they're based on. Just look at *The Hunger Games*, one of the more obvious example of the movie bump. In February of 2012, the month the movie was released, about 70,000 school kids read the book. In April, the month after the movie's debut, 180,000 students were turning the pages of *The Hunger Games*. The same goes for *The Lorax*, which saw a huge spike in readership the month the movie was released. **[KIDS ACTUALLY READS THE BOOKS THAT MOVIES ARE BASED ON]**

We can only wait and watch that how the bestselling novels transform into blockbusters films and how long are film makers drawn towards literature. As Jean-Luc Godard has rightly said that “it is not where you take things from-it is where you take them to.”

### III. CONCLUSION

It may be summed that the relationship between films and fiction has often resulted in the increase recognition for the author and the novel. However, these two different medium have won millions of fans all over the world. Actually we may say that, Films and literature are two different roads which lead to the same destination, they may often cross paths and it may also be added that 50% of commercial movies are adaptations from famous books. There is a symbiotic relationship between literature and films, though interrelated still they are independent forms of art.

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