

# Cinema, Literature and Literary Adaptation

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In general, the words Movie, Film and Cinema look synonymous but there is a very slight difference: A 'Movie' has some commercial connotations; 'Film' educational or documental and 'Cinema' is related to both the above including an aesthetic sense or perspective. Therefore, Cinema is one of the most fascinating artistic branches of Fine Arts which, ironically, up till now, has been a victim of the stagnant authorities of literature. According to Allen S. Weiss, 'Cinema is the art of animation par excellence, which is why the immobility of the frozen moment is particularly disquieting' (164). Cinema itself has been a topic of an unending discussion in recent years whether to accept it as a literary text or not, in present we witness a Word/Image Wars. Kamilla Elliott in "Novels, Films, and the Word/Image Wars," writes on this division as:

In 1957, George Bluestone applied Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's differentiations of poetry Lessing's differentiations had, in the first half of the twentieth century, come to stand for differences between words and images more generally. Thus, Bluestone's application placed novels in the word camp and films in the image camp. (2)

This is an open fact that since cinema came into existence, literature was the only thing by which it could exist. Since then, and even today, cinema has been influenced by literature at the level of creation, but literature on the other hand a little. A good literary text has not only been nutritious food to Indian-Cinema but also for International and World-Cinema as well. Wherever films are made and watched; literature stands as an essence for them that has been one of the most famous ancient arts. Its criteria are also very broad and open. In comparison to literature, cinema would be just an infant and very much different medium of artistic expression.

Sometimes back, since the increasing tendency of cultural studies emphasized cinema to understand it in political, social, and cultural context, cinema consolidated its identity as an individual and independent artistic genre. As in literature, there are some elements which make a written text literary, the same way there are special elements in cinema, in this connection, Roberge Gaston observes as, '[m]ost films are made of stories, dances, music, drama, photography, painting, architecture and something else that we call cinema'. Thus cinema can be called a collection of art, or a collective art in which almost all branches of Fine Arts are mingled together. Kamilla Elliott in "Novels, Films, and the Word/Image Wars" observes:

The interdisciplinary study of novels and films has tended to run along two sides of a paradox. On one side, novels and films are opposed as "words" and "images," agreed to be irreducible, untranslatable, a priori entities by most postmodern as well as prior scholars. On the other side, critics propound film's integral formal, generic, stylistic, narrative, cultural, and historical connections to the novel. Somewhat perplexingly, the two sides of the paradox tend to coexist within single critical works: they do not, by and large, represent differing views of opposed critics. (1)

In the beginning, films were based on ancient and traditional stories, romances and type characters. Experts of film studies agree on this point that in films type-

characters were created alike in ancient stories and romances. These characters used to be a bundle of virtues and evils, cinema initiated itself with these characters and stories which were traditional, historical, mythical, cultural, religious, imaginative, fictional and relevant with the super natural elements. They would end when goodness or virtues could get command over all evils in the story and the villain would turn to goodness with reconciliation.

In comparison to cinema, the circle of literary reader is limited and specific because every common man is not able to appreciate literature, while on the other hand the purpose of cinema is only to entertain people but to reflect something that is unusual and extraordinary; therefore there is a place for every one without any distinction. In other words, cinema is one and only art which is measured with the economical balance with the loss and benefit. Here balance of economy is crucial, without it the existence of film industry may have no meaning. Whenever people are concerned with cinema, the economic front is taken very seriously. Cinema is not only an art but also an industry now.

Actually cinema is such an artistic medium of creative expression in which every thing is set in an image on the screen as words on page. Here images have much more effect than words and sentences. It becomes much better than actual writing with a pen in some of the ways. R. M. Raza has no hesitation to declare cinema as literature, he rightly says:

Literature then was an art of sound as was music, in the beginning literature was listened and literature too was sung, but now literature is read. Today script or writing has taken the place of sound and now literature being no more an art of listening has become an art of watching. Thus film is also a script in which literature is being created. (Trns, 23)

However, everyone knows that cinema is an extended form of drama which has an independent identity as an artistic genre in literature. Therefore, R M Raza is of the view that if drama can get an independent identity in literary genres then, why not cinema? In cinema, there is picturisation; handy-craft, sculpture, dance, music, songs, painting, and even all the branches of the arts as a collective form of art which makes it more pleasurable with a temporary effect for a while.

The important thing is that at one hand almost all film-makers and film-experts are impatient to declare a film as a literary text, or a work of art, but on the other hand a literary group avoids accepting a film as a literary text. For their justification the group emerges with an argument reasoning that a film can never be included in literature. It is said that literature meets its demise the moment it comes in the hands of a film-maker, and then film-maker becomes the counterpart of the novelist or of the story writer.

A reader who is well aware of literature and cinema, s/he always wants a good piece of creation, novel, story or short story, whether translated into a film or inscribed on a page or articulated in the ears. When it happens, the circle of the reader increases high and the filmmaker, writer and the text they all get a new identity all over the world.

Littérateurs, filmmakers, painters, sculptors, poets, and dramatists even all the creative people in their respective areas and in their creative medium of expression deal with every second thing as a raw material other than their creative works. Every form of art selects its own medium to its own expression for its different meanings. Literature is only dependent on words, it uses only language as a medium of expression but a film is dependent on images, sounds, music, paintings, and dances. Literature is written with words and a film is captured in the eyes of a camera and then projected on a screen. Words are written on pages and images on the screen, one is read only; but the other is watched and heard at the same time. Words and images both are signs or symbols, sentences are made-up by joining words; then they give a little meaning or implication. Word in itself is meaningless whereas by an image some meaning can be created. As in literature there are words, sentences, paragraphs and pages the same is there in a film. It is produced by setting shots and images. In a film a story is narrated with the use of sounds, pictures and motion.

In literature there is a special use of language, there is deviation, foregrounding and forming. Literature is a product of conscious manipulation of language, it uses linguistic devices, figures of speech and phrases etc. But in film language, writes Elliott that:

[...] the "visual perception varies less throughout the world than languages do," film images have been regularly and widely proclaimed a "universal language." From the early 1900s, when reviewers heralded film as a cure for the Tower of Babel, to today, when the Landmark Company theaters preface each screening with the words "The language of film is universal," the analogy pervades public, artistic, and academic discourse.(5)

Almost all the elements of any artistic text, create a world in our mind when we read them on page. When the same thing we read on the screen of cinema, the word is transformed into concrete images. Sometimes in cinema hundred pages are transformed only in a single shot. In this way film-maker writes the image on screen with the pen of a camera. In the construction of images and production of a film director and camera-men play a crucial role. The image in a film becomes cinematic language as we do with literary language. In cinematic language image construction is given an extra care because they are dependent on images. The medium of cinema and literature can differ in their abilities and capabilities but both the languages make an effect on us. They evoke feelings, emotions, thoughts, fear, anxiety and happiness etc. The topic and the raw material of literature and films are similar; both seek their essence from their surroundings, a criticism of life with all its truth and beauty, sweetness and light.

In cinema there is a special use of techniques and technology as in literature by linguistic tools and devices. In it anything can be shown on screen which is very difficult to show in dramatic poetry. In this way, cinema becomes a magical art. Like drama, films also follow almost all the constant parts and elements given by Aristotle. In a film there is also a plot, dialogue, character, diction, spectacle and songs.

Time and circumstances both have provided priorities to "realism" in both mediums of expression. But the thing which makes both of them literature is its 'fictionality' that is a production of the process while referring to the reality that is inside or outside

the language, either literary or cinematic. For example the novel *Umrao Jan Ada* presents the realistic picture of that time, and the reader by his/her reading, constructs the picture of that time accordingly. But in a film the same Lucknow is shown as it is; in which we can not do any correction or amendment, whereas on the other hand while reading a novel we can do this to any extent. Every reader when s/he reads constructs a different picture which is not similar to each other. Though, in spite of all these happenings in the process of the reading the essence of the story is not lost. In this act the thinking, intellectuality and imagination of a filmmaker is examined that to what extent s/he has felt it, and then transferred it onto the screen.

The freedom which is there in the novel or story to broaden or concise any situation, scene or character is not in a film for its reader or writer. Here in a film all the things have to be taken in account only in a limited time. Therefore, in any adaptation of literary text the "time" is given an extra care to deal with any literary text, in this connection Jetnikoff observes:

[F]ilms and books *have* to be different, since time and space must be collapsed on screen. In a filmed narrative, there is a generally accepted time frame of somewhere between 90 and 120 minutes in which to tell a story that may take weeks to read in print. As teachers of English most of us love reading and our pleasant experience of relaxing into the book at our leisure, in our own time, can take weeks. (3)

In adaptation of any text some parts of text are not needed in a film and then they are omitted. The purpose of cinema is only to entertain the readers, to give aesthetic pleasure to the audience. Therefore, the elements that are difficult to common readers are omitted in a film for the convenience of general readers or observers. Susan Hayward, a film critic offers three ways of adaptation in her book *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts*:

Essentially, there appear to be three type of literary adaptation: first, the more traditionally connoted notion of adaptation; second, the literary classic, third, the adaptation of contemporary text not yet determined as classic and possibly bound to remain with the canon of popular fiction (12)

To translate or transform a novel or story into a film is considered only a literary adaptation; it is not only an adaptation but a recreation and re-description of the reality that is out there. It is purely original. By this act we reach from pages onto the screen. Some times the translation of any text from source language to target language is easier than making a film. In making a film we have to give a code to every word in an image form and thus the reader has to recreate the same meaning as it is with the word. In this process image language becomes the medium of communication. In this connection, Noa Steimatsky in "Photographic Verismo, Cinematic Adaptation, and the Staging of a Neorealist Landscape," writes:

The substitution of verbal conceptualization by an optical intellect is in other writings qualified as approaching the "perfect impersonality of the work of art," positivistically inflected by scientific or technological means. In this turn to the visual as possibly capable of fulfilling that which remains frustrated by language[...]. (210)

Story, either in film or in writing, is always an act of narration in which the narrator is in-between the story and the reader. There appear different ways of narration; some times the writer is apart and a part of characters and situation; without having any favor of them draws a picture in which he presents a particular community or society in his/her story, in this regard Allen S. Weiss writes that :

Narrative is always susceptible to the effects of a *deus ex machina*; whether it be an incomprehensible act of God, the imperious command of an absolute monarch, or the director's imperative cut, a moment of pure volition and unlimited power generates the narrative. (168)

Some times the voice plays a vital role in story telling if the speaker is male or female for example in the novel *Jane Eyre: An Autobiography* by Chorlotte Bronte ('Reader, I married him') and *Umrao Jan Ada*, the character Ada. Had Ruswa or Chorlotte Bronte chosen a male character there, they would not have been able to make a special effect to draw a picture of dying civilization and cultural dimentions. This is the only reason that there is something always special in a novel even today since it appears to be a Carnavalesque similarly as cinema joins all the branches of Fine Arts, a novel too, is a mixture of all the genres of literature. (Michael Bakhtine)

In cinema the act of narration is done by the director and the camera of camera men, here the same effect is created as a writer creates in a novel. In cinematic narration camera is always there which determines the audio-visual understanding. In modern time, cinema is being trapped in the discussion that a film, essentially which is a team work; in fact, who is its father or creator? Whether its creator is director, producer, story-writer, script writer, dialogue writer or even the actor? There are different views of experts in this connection, some of them say a film is also a book or literary text, painting, and picture; and there is some one who is its creator. In my view, perhaps, it will be most personal opinion that 'cinema should not be taken in any account as literature and a film is only a team work'. Sorlin, a film critic, does not give any importance to the director more than a leader, while Jhon Coughie accepts it that a film is though a team work, but he also believes that a film is a product of director and he too should be creditable for it.

Literature and cinema not only entertain those who appreciate it but also they provide a freedom of thought, a high ascendance to imagination and a view of the things with which it is dealt. Mostly it is seen that after the production of any film based on any novel or story, the writer and the text both get name and fame and win all laurels. In this way both of them are acknowledged more than what actually they were earlier.

The voice or effect of any literary creation echoes only in a corner of a limited room, but whenever the same thing is recreated in a form of a film then its circle exceeds and thus that creation can be spread in many of the languages by through its translation to each and every individual of the world. In this way the existence of cinema is neither any danger to literature nor literature to cinema, because in this developed world the soft copies of books are available in the market; in spite of all, there has been no harm to either mediums.

The point can also be understood in this way that, one of the most famous novel and plays of its time *Devdas*, and the magnum opus of Ruswa *Umrao Jan Ada*, *Love in the Time of Cholera*, by Marquez, *Midnight's Children* by Rushdi, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *Othello* by Shakespeare (adapted as Maqbool, Omkara and Haider) films have been made on these literary pieces, and even after then the novels and plays are sold and read; in this way, they became infinite and films also made us conscious to their actual essence. François Jost in his article "The Look: From Film to Novel: An Essay in Comparative Narratology" observes that:

[...] the relations between novel and film have often been thought of in hierarchical terms. To the extent that filmic adaptations of novels are much more frequent than novelistic adaptations of films (commonly called "novelizations"), scholars tend to reflect more on the transformation of written texts into images than on the converse transformation. There is certainly much to learn from comparing a given novel with its filmic adaptation, both in ideological and narrative terms. (71)

Many people now watch the films first and then read the text or the story later. There always remains the importance of any recreator of the text, I mean the film-maker and the actual writer of any text because till the time a story or novel is buried only in pages, paper or in books has only an identity of its writer, but whenever the same thing is transformed or translated in a form of a film and comes from pages onto the screen then it acquires a new identity along with its Director, the film-maker and the actor as well. Thus I would like to conclude my point with Elliott's views where she declares Word/Image Wars as agendas:

[...] the designation of novels as words and films as images serves agendas more than analysis. Traditionally, pure arts have been more highly valued than hybrid ones. Therefore, in the battle for representational dominance, novels and films have been pressed toward semiotic and aesthetic purity. Pure arts are not only "better": in the case of hybrid arts masquerading as pure arts, they can also claim territory which another hybrid art has abandoned in order to proclaim its own purity. They do this most commonly by using an analogical rhetoric, in which they speak of themselves in the language of the other. In order to obscure the contradictions between aesthetic practice and critical theory, artists and critics have supported word and image categorizations with an analogical rhetoric that speaks of film images in terms of language and of prose words in terms of painting. This rhetoric claims verbal territory for film images and pictorial territory for novel words at the same time as it obscures and overshadows the literal words of films and the literal pictures of novels. (5)

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