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Film and Literature: An Overview



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Abstract

Film and literature are the artistic expressions of human mind. Man thinks of different ways of communicating human experiences to broaden the enlightenment scenario. At the very outset, nobody takes an interest and favor towards the connection of filming and writing (literature). The relation (connection) of both, film and literature is as old as humanity. The 19th Century is the slow beginning to take an ideal shape of the process of creative exchange between film and literature. Film is such a field which was more related to photography and painting in the beginning. On the contrary, literature was almost restricting to print, which has more or less a permanent shape. Literature consists of different genres - short story, novel, drama and poetry. These all are the written documents, and it is clear that letters are used in literature.

Research Paper

Literature is a written communication whether in poetic shape or dramatic or fiction. It always communicates human experiences and employs devices of narrative. Film / films on the other hand mostly employ the spoken aspects of communication like sounds. Sounds are dominated in film making. Written and Spoken Communication is a very important source through which human beings gain wisdom throughout their life span. Man gets perfection when he makes use of both these aspects of language communication. It is just like this, a teacher cannot claim perfection if he neglects the spoken aspects and cultivates only the written one in his communication. So a teacher has to master the use of both words and sounds, if he wants to make a mark in the field of teaching.

Film and literature are two different things with a similar goal to create sublimity in human imagination and understanding. Both film and literature work hand in hand to boost the progress of human civilization. And they are the complimentary in nature and one is no substitute to the other, like letters and sounds in human communication. Film and literature inspire and enrich each others. They also ennoble human mind through action, images, words and replicating life of human beings. Adaptation of literary genres for filming is not a new / recent phenomenon but an old one. Adaptations of films have various sources for e.g. theatre, novel, music and painting. All these sources get techniques of stage, lighting, movements and gestures, structures, characterization, theme, point of view, rhythm, repetition colour & counter point respectively.

Adaptation of film / film making is an advanced and important milestone in the development / progress of human being. Film is the only area, which depicts the people, though they are of any class (poor, middle & rich) along with the predicament and happiness. Such depiction makes literatures look more realistic and touchy. Films also capture the same like literature but due to its visual and sound effect, it got wide popularity. The reading of literature is a mono-sensory private experience of readers whereas witnessing a film is multisensory communal experience emphasizing immediacy. One thing is very clear and one has to accept it that literature gives verbal literacy while

films give visual literacy. Thus, there is a link between literature and film. So that film is considered as a branch of literature. Film is also a thing of past not a new which existed in overnight from somewhere in a society. In fact, adaptation of film is not a recent phenomenon. It is right there from the dawn of film industry.

The famous filmmaker and a master of film adaptation George Melies has contributed a lot to film adaptations and the work to his credit is *Cinderella* and *King John*. The first was based on the grim story of Cinderella's brothers while the other on the work of William Shakespeare. Sherlock Holmes's *Baffled* was based on Conan Doyle's detective character Sherlock Holmes, which was the first detective movie, released in 1900. *A Trip to the Moon* was released in 1902 based on the original science fiction of the two writers-Jules Verne & H.G. Wells. The first Hollywood film was the *Sequae Man* (1914) based on Edwing - Milton Royle's play of the same name. Charles Dickens *A Christmas Carol* was adapted frequently for films. Stephan Hunter States the main difference between a novel and a film adaptation is to focus on mind in the novel. Otherwise, both are for character, setting and plot. Film making and fiction writing are the independent reactive activities and would not come to terms to unite.

Bimal Mitra's Bengali story '*Saheb Bibi Aur Gulam*' filmed (adapted) by Guru Dutt proved beyond any shadow of doubt. Sharad Chandra Chattopadhyaya's stories - *Devdas* and *Parinneth* were filmed to the great satisfaction and enjoyment of the public and time. It was also a very great achievement in the field of film making. *Omkara* movie of 2006 is based on William Shakespeare's play (tragedy) *Othello* written in 17th Century. Most recently, R.K. Narayan's *Guide* was adapted into a bollywood classic of the same title successfully and it got a wide popularity.

No doubt, literature and film are the artistic expression, unifying the human mind. Most of the films are adaptations of novels. The interest displayed by the public in watching the films speaks volumes about the quality of creativeness both in the original and adaptation. Film and literature are common in certain points of contact, as they are the narrative structure and impression of reality. Both the narrator of the text and the director of film

adapt the theme in accordance with their goals and ideology. The writers use the literary language whereas in film adaptation the director uses a language peculiar / fit to visual imagination for the appreciation of audience. One more slight difference between literature and film - the novel tells us what has happened and at the same time, (though it is adaptation) film tells us what is happening. On the other hand / on contrary, film is more elaborate and influences the behaviour of characters and also unfolding of events in the story.

Heroldo de Campos formulated a theory of translation as a recreation in which he states the aesthetic messages defy efforts of translation, making translation impossible to retain the same flavour of aesthetic aspect of original text. Thus, adaptations are often open 'shaping the tastes of the day'. As a result, the languages of the writer of the text and director of film adaptation workout the process of translation through isomorphism and inter-semiotic system. Such process forces every translation in filming to go beyond the original text. The success of the film adaptation thus depends upon the Skill / creativity of the directors of the films. Such skill shows the rich contribution of bringing the arts towards each other. Film adaptation becomes more credible and acceptable, only the film directors ignore the sensory actions and act for conception action scenes which narrator's words and tone take a broader sense. The film maker's / directors forte lies in such techniques which makes him satisfied and drives out the feelings of indifference.

According to Virginia Woolf, film adaptators have to invent their own language if they want to thrive and blossom the film. The adaptation of book into cinemas (Indian film) has nothing new it. It is clear that right from Shakespeare to Ruskin Bond adaptations have been inspired and adapted from literary works. The mythological things fitted well in film making for e.g. The Ramayana and The Mahabharata. It is to note that film making has the potential to capture human imagination and attention. It is as creative as writing a story or a novel. And it is no use to look down upon one thing and favour the other. Both film and literature have their uses and significance to further the cause of human civilization.

In short, literature casts light on the meaning in the film and the study of the film can illuminate the full value of literature. Cinema and literature have fruitful relationship, yet, we find both differ from each other in so many ways. Literature is the most important thing, which has provided many opportunities to the film makers around the world. The result / as an outcome we see a number of memorable films around us. The literature reverberates with multitudinous philosophies, combating theologies in humorous languages flourishing with many cultures over the ages. From such rich, deep and fertile soil / base of literature films have taken its firm roofs. The relation of film and Cinema in many ways proved a successful symbiosis.

As society progressed, the medium of cinema well as that of literature made huge strides to register great impact on human psyche. One form of literature (drama) blossomed into the magic cinema. Such refinement with the aid of innovation gave rise to silent movies and then to revolutionary and all-powerful art form cinema. In cinema and literature, a story is narrated but in different ways. Films present visual images to the audiences who consume them as real because they move in front of them. While in literature (fiction) the author creates images in words means verbal signs. Fiction reading provokes readers to immerse into the text to grasp the meaning of the text. The literature (fiction) requires a kind of looking at the word, phrase and sentence. In film, the reader is assisted by the film maker as the external manifestation of the character's actions is visually presented.

Film and literature have much similarity and difference. In literature (fiction), the writer uses language to show the interior of the characters while in films the moving pictures show the character through actions. In fiction, the narration is in the third person whereas in films it is in linear fashion. In fiction, the author's role is to create word pictures for the reader to delve into the character. While in films the audience is saved from the trouble of transforming words into images. Reading is mostly personal, fragmented and time consuming, on the other hand, watching a movie is communal and continuous experience. Reading is for brain while watching is for eyes. Literature is silent while movie employs sound to heighten the effect on

audience. The screenplay as well as the songs is the handiwork of a seasoned writer. Thus, prose and poetry are fused together to make a successful movie. Film and literature, no doubt both gives knowledge. Books read are unspecific in the sense that they are open to interpretations but movies are specific and the audiences have to follow the path shown by the film. A single individual produces literature but film is the product of many and is a concerted effort of director, photographer, characters and other technical staff. In literature (*novel or short story*) the writer's imagination and mastery of language results in creating the right verbal images for the reader to comprehend the characters and their actions. In film, the external features like Physical attributes to support the understanding of the characters are visible as the audience is left with no choice but to fall in line with the director of the film. And the visuals of the film leave deep impression on the audience for two reasons : the actors who portray the characters appeals to the audience; the action both valiant and romantic.

Adaptation of films (literature/text) into film is not new for the Indian film Industry. And the impact of literature on the films is almost as old as film making itself. Indian cinema has adapted many literary works from William Shakespeare to Ruskin Bond. The adaptation of the literary work into the film has created a new form / genre in the film industry. Such adaptation makes one to think or compare, either this book is better or film. John Harrington in his *Film and / is Art* highly estimated that the one third of all films ever made have been adapted from novels. Other literary forms like drama or short stories are adapted near about sixty percent or more. It's true that most of the films / film script have literary base / adaptation. Though it may Shakespearean or Chetan Bhagat's writing. One thing is clear that literature has always inspired and provided material to the film in one or the other way to both Hollywood & Bollywood industry. According to George Bluestone, the critic of adaptation literature, a film maker is as much important as an independent artist, he is not a translator for an established author but a new author in his own right. And finally we can say or familiar with the phrase, 'I think the book was better'.

The difference between film and literature is that of visual images which stimulate our perception directly. Film is more direct sensory experience than reading. In verbal language, there is a colour of sounds, emotions, movements, languages etc. On the other hand, a film never allows audience the power of imagination. Especially in Hollywood movies, the term '*Cut to the Chase*' is used. It means the film has a selected and dramatic scene captured to get the attention of the audience, at the same time the literary work has a complex plot and setting. It is quite true that many examples of successful film are from the literary work. Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* is adapted into film by Samuel Goldwyn in 1939. William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (Nobel Prize winning novel) 1954 was scripted into film in 1963. Moving to Vishal Bharadwaj, the film *Maqbool* is an adaptation of *Macbeth*, *Omkara* from *Othello*, *Haider* from *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare are all in class itself. Adaptation / film adaptation is a process of transformation of a literary text into a film or a film into a novel. Film adaptation deals with the adaptation of a novel into a film.

Novel to Film by George Bluestone (1957) is a seminal book in the area of adaptation. Film and literature / literary text share similarities and differences from each other. According to him, there is the superiority of literary text over the film adaptation by stating the adaptation as a mere copy of literary text. It highlights the importance of fidelity of film in adaptation studies. George Wagner in *The Novel and the Cinema* (1975) focuses on film adaptation. According to him, literature still achieves higher rank to cinema in academic studies. Film and literature are the binary pairs and they have marginalized the intertextuality of film adaptation along with its contextuality. The book highlights the three manners of adaptation : transposition, commentary and analogy.

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