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**Adaptation of Novel to Film: a Theoretical Perspective for a Student of Film and Literature Studies****Dr. Santosh D. Rathod***Assistant Professor in English, IDOL, University of Mumbai, (M.S.) India***Abstract**

Many Department of English and Cultural Studies all over the world offer courses in adaptations of classics for making films. The vogue of adaptation has led the authorities of Academy Award to confer a separate award for adapted screenplays in Hollywood. Similarly the efforts are made by the other language including Marathi departments in the universities. Marathi language and literature has always invited the attention at national and international scholars towards the various literary genre produced in it. Therefore, this paper focuses more on the perspective of the students of literature to the adaptation studies.

**Key Words:** adaptation, Appropriation, film, character, plot, setting, intralingual, Interlingual, translation, and intersemiotic

Many English Literature and English Media study departments in universities offer courses on adaptations. And in Hollywood, Academy Award confers a separate award for adapted screenplays distinguishing adapted from original ones. Similarly the efforts are made by the other language and literature departments in the universities and college across the globe. India is rich country in terms of production of literature and film in many of its languages. Marathi language and literature has always invited the attention at national and international levels when it comes to producing literature and producing film in Marathi Language. The popularity of this new area among literature and media departments has led to emphasizing the importance of adaptation studies today. What is it that is required for the study of adaptation from literature in general and novel in particular to film

study? Therefore, this presentation focuses more on the perspective of the students of literature to the adaptation studies. The scholar of literature to film adaptation must have the following minimum qualifications: One, s/he must have literary training, process of literary creation, elements of literature (novel) like character, plot, setting, dialogue, music etc. from the scholar. Two, the scholar must be familiar to the art of film, film theory and film analysis. Three, the scholar must be familiar to the traditional debates on the adaptation studies. And finally, the scholar must be familiar to a long tradition of adaptation studies. And the different approaches must come into play for enrichment and expansion of the adaptation studies.

So to begin with, what is adaptation? What is its origin and development? Adaptation is a process of transforming a source text to

target text. It takes a route from one genre (novel, drama, short story poem etc) to another genre. It may also travel from one medium (film stage play, video games etc) to another medium. It is generally also seen that adaptation is passage of a genre or medium to the same genre or medium for another purpose (smaller cast, different venue, and different demographic group.) for example. Saranga Bhakare's Dushantpriya, a Marathi play, is based on Kalidasa's *Shakuntala* which explores the love and erotic relationship between heterosexual couples. In this play, Bhakre changes the gender of Shakuntala and attempts to delineate the homosexual and gay relationship between two men. While adapting source into target text the adaptor has a lot of challenges. This process gives various kinds of adaptations. For example Desmond and Hawkes in *Film Adaptations: the Case of Apples and Oranges* categorize film as 'a close adaptation', 'a loose adaptation', and 'an intermediate adaptation'. These distinctions are based on how much the adaptor has retained the originality of the source text. Adaptation is in fact a process of translating the literary text into a visual text. Again, in *On Linguistic Aspect of Translation*, Roman Jakobson distinguishes three kinds of translation: intralingual (rewording), Interlingual (translation proper), and intersemiotic translation (transmutation). Intralingual translation involves "the interpretation of verbal sign by means of other signs in the same language". Interlingual translation refers to "an

interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language." Transmutation involves "interpretation of verbal signs by means of nonverbal sign system." Jakobson's intersemiotic translation incorporates adaptation of literary works into film. Julie Sanders in *Adaptation and Appropriation* defines adaptation as "a specific process involving the transmission from one genre to another: novels into film; drama into musicals; dramatization of prose narratives and fiction or inverse movement of making drama into prose narrative." (P. 9)

Julie Sanders in *Adaptation and Appropriation* offers comparative methods of analyzing both adaptation and appropriation. She puts: "Adaptation studies are then not about making polarized value judgments but about analyzing process, ideology and methodology" (2006: p.20) for example compare and contrast two texts that comprise the entire process/product of literature to film adaptation.

There are many things common between literature and the film. Film as an art has very close relation to literature, for they make use of plot, characters, setting, dialogues, imagery, time and space etc. Literature is verbal medium while cinema is visual. To select, highlight, distort and enhance the visualized word dramatically, the novelist employs verbal description and filmmaker uses lens his camera. A process of screenplay is either original Endeavour or a creation out of a source text. The later art concerns with adaptation. The process of adaptation involves from reading and

interpreting the novel to designing, planning and making the film. Film has a narrative structure comprised of many scenes, arranged in purposeful way from a particular point of view. This transformation gained importance and attracted the scholars for its commercial and artistic values. It is believed that adapted works are more bankable; less risk and more financial gains as it earned the wide readership. It needs less post production publicity and thus it pulls the audience to the theaters. In his, *Novel into Film*, George Bluestone draws the distinction in terms of pluralist versus singularist production and consumption: Creator/producer of novel is an individual while the film is produced cooperatively and restricted by self-imposed codes. Consumption of novel is small and literature audience/ single audience at a time while for film is mass audience. Censorship/authorship and ownership is single in case of novel while for film it's plural. The literary value of the classical and best seller appeals to the larger literate audience. On the contrary, if it is adapted to the visual art it becomes open to the illiterate audience. And thus adaptation encompasses the larger audience than the literature. Another important reason to adapt is to tap into innovation and novelty; the less known authors are adapted. It is because the question of faithfulness arises when there is the higher the profile of the source text, the greater the risk/ question of fidelity. There is another risk of intellectual copyright and plagiarism in the process of adaptation. The ownership and the copyright law is force for

a particular time even after the demise of the copyright holder. But when a literary work has not passed into public domain, adaptation must be undertaken legally as plagiarism occurs in every genre throughout history of writing though such literary violations can be challenged in the court. For example, *Gajani*, a Hindi feature film has been remade from south Indian film which was plunged into the controversy for this reason. In this way the practice of adapting the best sellers (classics) as well as lesser known works or author has expanded the horizon of the adaptation studies.

Next point that appears on the scene is the difference between remake and adaptation. As a student of adaptation study must know to evaluate the adaptation studies. It is generally accepted that any films based on earlier produced films are made again are called as retake. The making of such film involves the act of reusing materials, allusions or line by line change of retake of the earlier movie. For example, *Gajani* and *Don* are remade films. But the difference lies in the fact that *Gajani* is remade from a film in one language to another while *Don* is in the same language. On the other hand, adaptation involves transferring a written work in whole or part. It is a sort of derivative work. The sources of adaptation are many like novel, journalism, comic books, plays, historical sources or other films for example *Jodha Akabar* is a Hindi feature film that is based on the historical event in India.

The birth of adaptation studies in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century brought significant changes. For



Theodore Dreiser and Allen Spiegel, the presence of adaptation and its entry in the film is similar to early appearance of photography, writing and the like. Photography could be the ruination of painting, the car the horse, and the film the book. Oral tradition has been threatened by the writing in the ancient Greek. The written texts are being replaced (placed side by side) visuals or images. Alan Spiegel observes: "the contemporary novel at its most advanced now consorts with the coldness and passivity of the photographic plate. Just as photography seemed to release painting from its representational function, so perhaps the film was always meant to appropriate the mimetic tradition in literature." (p. 197.)

The beginning of the adaptation study centered on the points: originality and fidelity. This led to two groups of theoreticians those who source text has been superior and original and the adaptation is a derivative and inferior, and those who seem to be liberal and want flexibility. Traditional debates in the field of adaptation studies took place for the following: faithfulness to original texts; original work is superior and the derivative is inferior and thus there existed a superiority/inferiority complex. Adaptation as a parasitism depends on literature for meaning. This attitude springs from the belief that literature as a source is original and superior to film, since literature enjoys anteriority and seniority over film adaptation which is merely a derivative. It is said that a cinematic frame speaks louder than words. Literary words are ambiguous

while cinematic angle, cut etc make multiple significations. There is another belief regarding the existence of film as an art. Some believe that film study is an extension of literary genre while others believe that it is an independent art form.

From the earlier days fidelity has been the centre of adaptation study which is considered as a yardstick to evaluate. Thomas Leitch in *Twelve Fallacies in the Contemporary Adaptation Theory* writes that fidelity to its source text is hopelessly fallacious measure of a given adaptation values as it is unattainable and undesirable. In addition, Brian McFarlane in *Novel to Film* proposes that adaptation study has been bedeviled by the fidelity and originality. However, during 1960s and 70s post structuralism theorists subverted many of these hierarchies and binaries and the focus of this study shifted to the new approach that sees film adaptation as 'intertextual work' and as 'critical interpretations of literary texts' which enhance and expand the reading of source texts. Thus for this later development in the study of adaptation, it is a practice of intertextuality where a text depends on other texts to get new system of significations and meanings. Key questions generally raised by the scholars of adaptation study define the foci of the study: Where does one begin to analyse the process? (Creative process of novel and that of adaptation from novel to film; hypotext). Where does one begin to analyse the production? (hypertext). Where does one begin to scrutinize the entire system of adaptation? And how does one

continue? Issues and other intricacies of novel adaptation that occupy the centerstage in this study is fact whether the adaptor must fully depend on the original text or must independently using his individual talent in terms of 'elision' and 'interpolation'. Putting everything in a novel into film does not fit in the new form. Hence, Elision is mandatory. However, film adaptation interpolates scenes or invents characters or creates stories not the part of original stories. Interpretation as adaptation is a form of criticism, recreation and transcreation. A group of theorist believes that both source and target texts are separate entities, hence conforming to accuracy and fidelity is absurd and impossible. On the other hand, others hold that adaptation fits to the need hence adaptation must be accurate to aesthetic effects of novel or accurate to the theme or message of novel. The scene of 'only author' syndrome attached to screenplay has been changed by the success Andrew Davies achieved the fame as an adaptor. He understood the expectations of audience from the adaptation: what is added to the hypotext (source text) rather than what is left out. Therefore Davies has identified ten secrets of good adaptation:

- a. Read the book.
- b. Ask yourself: why this book, and why now?
- c. Ask yourself: whose story is this, really?
- d. Don't be afraid to change things, especially openings.
- e. Don't start without a plan.
- f. Never use a line of dialogue if you can achieve the effect with a look.

- g. Crystallize dialogue to its essence.
- h. Write scenes that aren't in the book.
- i. Avoid voice-over, flashbacks, and characters talking directly to camera.
- j. Break your own rules when it feels like the right thing to do

Gerald Genette's idea about the relations between the source text and the target text makes it clear if the adaptor is familiar with the five types of relations the two texts has between them. One, *intertextuality* includes the quotes from other texts, plagiarism of another texts or allusion to other text. Two, *paratextuality* refers to relations a text has with its title, prologue, epilogue (e.g. James Joyce Ulysses or Nishani Dava Angatha). Three, *metatextuality* refers to criticizing one text by another through satire or irony. Four, *Architextuality* indicates relation a text has to generic attributions (romantic comedy). And finally, *hypertextuality*: refers to the adaptation of a text into another medium or its transformation into a different text.

Historical development of adaptation study will show the growth of this study. The beginning of adaptation study marks the assumption that written text is superior to visual one gives rise to the two important concerns for evaluation of adaptation: originality and fidelity. However the structuralist and poststructuralist theoretical developments in 1960s and 70s subverted these hierarchies and binaries and observed film adaptation as intertextual work as a critical interpretations of literary texts which enhance the reading of source text. In this way, film adaptation becomes a practice of



intertextuality where a text depends on other texts to construct its system of significations. Geoffrey Wagner's *The Novel and the Cinema* (1975) draws the distinction between modes of adaptation: Transposition, Commentary and Analogy. During 1990s Adaptation Study and other disciplines witnessed a cross fertilization; for example, Patrick Catryusse in *Film (Adaptation) as Translation: Some Methodological Proposals* (1992) proposed polysystem theory of translation be applied to the study of film adaptation. Adaptation like translation is source oriented which emphasizes on faithful reconstruction of source text. Macfarlane's *Novel to Film: an Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation* (1996) believes that the focus on faithfulness has been obscured the fundamental issues of adaptation studies. Therefore he puts that there is need to distinguish between 'transfer' and 'adaptation proper' the former term he means, "what may be transferred from novel to film" and by the later, "what will require more complex processes of adaptation". In 2000, *Film Adaptation*, an anthology of essays edited by James Naremore emphasizes the need for adaptation studies to move away from formalistic concerns in light of contextual and intertextual factors. Robert Stam's terms to describe the efficacy of literature to film adaptation were based

on concepts of fidelity and infidelity, faithfulness and unfaithfulness, betrayal, violation and desecration. Timothy Corrigan in *Literature on Screen, A History: In the Gap* defends film. He traces the history of film adaptation and explains how the adaptation of literature to film raises the quality of film and the quality of its audience. He also draws attention to 1920s and '30s when the film adaptations became popular thanks to introduction of sound in 1927. He observes that this gave rise to questions of censorship/ ownership/ authorship. It can be observed that adaptation study today has been embraced post structuralist theories, cultural studies and reception studies. The intertextual elements in source texts and film texts are employed to refute the notion of originality and fidelity of source text. The methodology employed for analyzing the film adaptation includes the following. One, scrutiny and dissection of source text to reveal the intertext in it. Two, analyse film to uncover the intertexts in film. And finally, mise-en-scene analysis of selected scenes to discover how the novel is adapted to film.

Thus the emergence of adaptation study and its interface with film and literature not only defined its scope, but also gave the approach to evaluate the adaptation study to enrich the horizon of literature and film studies.

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