

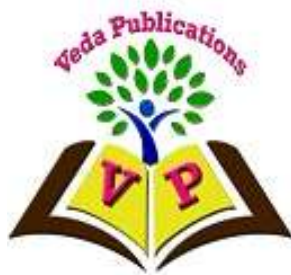


A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF FILMS, LITERATURE AND CULTURE AS AN ELEMENTAL OF TRILOGY IN SOCIAL CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT



This paper delves with a critical analysis of the three concepts: Literature, Films and Culture as an entity and a Trilogy. It basically explores the interconnections in the three categories and the manner in which they feed into each other as the audience receive and perceive them. More prominently the paper focuses on the impact of films and literature in moulding the Indian culture. The processes of producing the meaning and the end depend on the literature as well as films. Neither film nor literature is a self-contained independent medium or artifact, and even as they use and produce culture, they become its subverters.

This paper explores the range of the interpretative strategies which are very diverse: social and political history --- gender positions and feminist theory --- cinematic frameworks and the theory of the gaze --- landscape, space and exteriority --- diasporic location and relationship to the culture of origin --- religion and patriarchy which are a frame work of literature and of films. The paper explores this context exemplifying few bold films and fictions that established the culture.

Keywords: *Culture, Literature, Films, Influence, Society, Consequences, Adaptation*



Literature and films have had a major impact on the development of society and culture. They have shaped civilization, changed political systems and exposed injustice. They give us a detailed preview of human experience, allowing us to connect on basic levels of desire and emotion. However as they have constructed societies, the writings and works of certain authors have degraded society to these most primitive form.

Literature and films study human nature and human culture. We see human nature through tragedy and romance, joy and sorrow, in epiphanies and denial, in moments of heroism and in moments of cowardice and such related aspects. Literature and films teaches us to analyze a character, allows us to reach inside his or her mind so we see what drives a character, what shapes his or her beliefs and how one relates to others. In the same way it is also the culture that influences literature and films. The writers and directors the themes and the stories for their respective work is the culture of different areas extending from rural, tribal and urban.

Literature and Cinema has also accepted the challenge to portray the frightening phenomenon of communal violence and terrorism at a transnational level. Writers and Filmmakers have made important contributions towards inaugurating serious discourse on the issues such as nationalism, and the protection of human rights of the minorities in India. Literary texts have been extensively adapted for the screen by filmmakers. These both have become a strong weapon in portraying Indian culture boldly. This interrelation of cinema and literature towards culture found an expression of adaptation. The comparative study of the different texts within the scope of this research can be appreciated by understanding of cinema as an art, comparison of the two media and understanding the different aspects of cinematic adaptation.

Films and literature were seen as a creative pursuit that produced films and novels and these can be seen as a text that could be read and comprehended through visual images and integrated in a particular context. The common thing that resembles is these both are the voices of general human emotions. In this aspect the Language of Literature and Cinema have a dynamic correlation as

languages in different aesthetic genera. From the earliest filmmakers till date the films have relentlessly explored literature in the number of ways. Until the advent of cinema, literature, especially novels, were the most popular means of creative expression. Cinema is a great life-like medium that preserves our past, stories, imaginations, legends and the great acting (Huda 9-10). Since its emergence, cinema has used techniques inherent to literature like symbolism, figurative language, vivid and graphic representation. Cinema or the 'seventh art' bears many common elements with literature. The film and the novel have 'strong syntactical resemblance' (Bluestone 1). Both literature and cinema make us perceive reality through different ways. The two art forms make us see the previously unnoticed reality, thereby projecting the human conditions in different societies and different contexts

The writers like Khushwant Singh, Bapsi Sidhwa, S. Hussain Zaidi, Shonali Bose and film makers like Anurag Kashyap, Deepa Mehta, Rajiv Dholakia and others have brought to life the incessant soreness caused to the victims of communal violence that is barely registered by historical documentation. The novelist meditates on the situation and through different literary devices, recreates the different episodes of life, making the reader see the hidden dimensions of truth. Most of the mythological and historical movies are the depiction and the adaption of literary master pieces ranging from Mahabharata to until date works. Here most of the culture is portrayed by the directors as written by the writers from Vyas to Salman Rushdie. Novelist and director meet here in common intention. One may, on the other hand, see visually through the eye or imaginatively through the mind. And between the percept of the visual image and the concept of the mental image lies the root difference between the two media.(Bluestone 1). According to Aragay, adaptation negotiates the past/present divide by recreating the source text- as well its author, historical context and a series of inter texts- an insight which studies of film adaptation have gradually come to terms with since the early 1990s (Aragay 23).



The language of cinema and literary works aesthetically embodies the different cultural aspects of a society. Religion has always been important cultural construct in the Indian context and communal violence an integral phenomenon of the Indian society since partition. Through recreating the different literary texts the film makers have provided a serious discursive platform to the issues raised by the writers on socially relevant issues.

This paper focuses on three parts portraying Indian culture: Part I is about films adapted from literature, part II with films and fiction depicting real picture of India and III part about the master pieces by the novelist and few autobiographies dealing on Indian culture.

I

The films 1947: Earth, Black Friday and Train to Pakistan within the scope of this research are cinematic adaptations of the novels Ice Candy Man, Black Friday: The True Story of Bomb Blasts and Train to Pakistan respectively. The novel Amu is the script of the film Amu extended into a novel. The film Parzania and the novel Fireproof are inspired by the communal carnage in Gujarat during February 2002. These films spanning over a period of two decades (1998-2007) have explored the important socio-political junctures in the metamorphosis of India.

Pinjar is set during India's partition; Pinjar is one of the most acclaimed works by the Indian poet and author, Amrita Pritam. It describes the hardships faced by the rural Indian women who were bound by the strict laws of the society during those times. It was adapted into a movie of the same name. Pinjar, the movie, won the National Award for Best Feature Film along with several other acclaims. The novel The Blue Umbrella is a simple story set in the hills of Himachal Pradesh, the home ground of Ruskin Bond. This story is about a little girl named Biniya and her blue umbrella. Directed by Vishal Bharadwaj, the film earned the National Award for Best Children's film.

Saawariya is a magical tale beautifully picturized by Sanjay Leela Bhansali. This story is inspired by Fyodor Dostoevsky's short story, 'White Nights. Shatranj Ke Khiladi is another novel, directed by none other than Satyajit Ray, is based on a story of the same name by Munshi Premchand. It's set during the eve of India's first struggle for independence. This

movie shows how, the British are strengthening their grip on the country by annexing every state, step by step, by crafty political maneuver. Junoon is also a novel with great plot by Ruskin Bond's novella A Flight of Pigeons was brought to the screen by none other than Shyam Benegal. This story is set during the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 and depicts the various social, moral and political complexities which are equally relevant today.

Water is about life in a widow's ashram in India in the 1930s directed by Deepa Mehta. The freedom struggle, which was gathering steam at the time under the charismatic leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, provides the backdrop. This shows how the life for women in India is unfair; and when personal conscience triumphs societal beliefs, good things happen.

Earth is an oeuvre of Partition of India and its consequences. It is about what happens to a group of friends in Lahore when Partition divides their lives in half. As August 15, 1947 and the independence of India approaches, Partition is announced: a line will be drawn through the populous state of Punjab to create Pakistan, and no one knows where the line will be, and whether Lahore will end up in secular India or Muslim Pakistan. The film was based on a book called Cracked India by Bapsi Sidhwa. This clearly depicts the decision to rip India apart and separate brother from brother, and sister from sister was brutal — and its force is still being felt.

This above explanation is apt in the following works and adapted films have predicted and included the practices and culture of India without losing the genuinity. It also represents ethnicity where films have from time to time fallen back on literature in search for stories to present on celluloid. These films are the best portrayal of about the social, cultural, economic, and religious ostracism of Hindu widows in India. In Deepa Mehta's work, especially her elemental trilogy--Fire (1996), Earth (1998) and Water (2005)--has received international acclaim, instigated controversy, and caused debate in international and Indian newspapers and magazines, and among scholars because these films depict women's domination by the patriarchal religious and nationalist ideologies of India during the historical



period represented. These films portray women's identity, empowerment, and sexuality as a challenge to the embedded power relations in Indian society and culture.

Book lovers will argue with the statement, 'never judge a book by the movie,' while cinema lovers will stick to 'stories are brought to life,' but the fact remains, literature will always find a way to the silver screen. It is the director's vision which can do justice to the story. Filmmakers like Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Ghatak, Mrinal Sen, and Shyam Benegal have seamlessly transformed the words on pages to dialogues on screen. They have really brought and showed Indian culture on silver screen. She focused more on depicting feminist politics and sexual politics, women's subjectivity and empowerment, and women's historiography, as well as the deconstruction of post-colonial patriarchal and nationalist ideologies.

Many of the bold writers and directors produce writings and films with: dis/location as a point of confluence of economic, political, cultural, and psychic processes. This gave multiple subject positions that are juxtaposed, contested, proclaimed or disavowed; permitting and the prohibited perpetually interrogate; and where the accepted and transgressive imperceptibly mingle even while these syncretic forms may be disclaimed in the name of purity and tradition

II

Apart from adaptation in showing the real and at sometime brutal practices India there are few films that are being produce on the forceful prostitution and trafficking: Chameli, Lakshmi and other Apart from adaptations fictitious stories also are based on the historical events where culture is the main strand in the movies like: Gadar (consequences after partition), Jodha Akbar (about Akbars' relation with Jodha), Padmavat (based on Jahangir) are to mention a few.

Most importantly films are very close to the culture and comprehension of common man. Culture, tradition and harsh realities of society are very much depicted through films. This is very much clear through the movies of Deepa Mehta's Fire (1996) is a story of two sisters-in-law who challenge the patriarchal religious traditions and hetero normative

roles and duties assigned to women in a joint Hindu family and get involved in a homoerotic relationship. Fire engendered criticism and violent reception among Hindu religious fundamentalists as it depicted lesbian relationship and the alleged misrepresentation of women and Hindu culture.

Monsoon Wedding this bonus film is by Mira Nair, a fantastic director who tackles social issues head on. Monsoon Wedding is about an upper-middle-class family preparing. This film is true to life, and does show what it's like on the "inside" of family life. In India, family is everything. Lagaan means "tax" — the tax paid by Indian subjects to their British overlords; and the film Lagaan, set during the Victorian era, is about a tax revolt by overburdened villagers. The tax revolt crisis leads to a cricket match challenge between the villagers, who have never played the game before — led by Aamir Khan. It's a feel-good movie on a grand scale about national pride.

Hence Literature and Cinema have been successful in transcending geographical and cultural barriers. They exhibit the list of movies and works that has portrayed varied, but contradictory, ideologies and beliefs. In particular, films in an era produced movies like Pink (2016) and Angry Goddesses (2015) attempt to dismantle the patriarchal fetters strangling the lives of women, films such as Sultan (2016) and Cocktail (2012) disturbingly end up contributing to its re-establishment. Likewise, while movies like Bajrangi Bhaijaan (2015) and Filmistaan (2014) accentuate emotional memories of brotherhood between the two nations (India and Pakistan) latent within society beyond brutal political games, films such as Border (1997), Gadar (2001), and Maa Tujhe Salaam (2002) have blatantly produced an outright negative image of Pakistan. Thus, films seem to be a stage for the occurrence of parallel contradictory phenomena where the inclination towards one is contingent on the contextual stimuli of a particular period.

Films besides welcoming an intriguing and entertaining cultural object, also witnessed the manipulation of the meaning of culture, which shifted from Indian culture, incorporating the values and beliefs of different faiths and beliefs, to a predominantly Hindu culture. Mani Ratnam's movies



deserve a special mention here. There has been huge debate over the Ratnam's trilogy of *Roja* (1992), *Bombay* (1995), and *Dil Se* (1998), and the 'essential' Indian nationalist values these films foster. *Dil Se* and *Roja*, which were commercially successful, reflect the compelling idea of commitment towards nation, which marks the final end in one's lives. Likewise, movies like *Jaal-The Trap* (2003) and *Fanaa* (2006) sets forth the similar stipulation. While *Fanaa* portrays the love story of two Kashmiri Muslims, *Jaal-The Trap* revolves around the love story of two Kashmiri Pandits. In both the movies, one of the lovers is a terrorist while the other takes up the burden of bringing down the former for the 'love of Motherland'. Both the stories prioritise the nationalist responsibility of a 'good' citizen towards her nation that comes before any sort of human emotion. An uncritical reception of such movies with huge commercial returns proves the inculcation of similar values in society. Use of symbols like flags and slogans makes it much easier, albeit significant, in the consumption of already well constructed images of 'Indian-ness'.

There is no denying that the subtle transformation of cinema to a significant political tool has had a significant impact on the public sphere, which has now evidently begun to put off any scope of argumentation or discussion. The current scenario has turned India into a site for the unrestrained lynch mob, ghar vapasi (return to the Hindu fold), violence on minorities, Dalits, and many unprecedented crimes against humanity. Directors, academicians, writers, scholars, activists, and other staunch opponents of such ideology attempted to raise a united voice with the hope of influencing popular culture and discourse. And also recent movies like *Kaala* by Rajnikant brought forth the problems of underprivileged and focusing a strong socio-political action portraying political core.

There are also movies which had a deeper impact on Indian society. For example, the film *Baabul* (2006) raised the issue of widow remarriage, while *Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham* (2001) extolled the virtue of respecting elders. The widely acclaimed *Rang De Basanti* (2006) gave voice to youth angst about the nation's corrupt politics and politicians. Modern Bollywood directors like Madhur

Bhandarkar and Prakash Mehra have raised awareness about the issues of the day through their movies. The films *Rann* (2007), *Corporate* (2006) and *Gulaal* (2009) exposed political and social controversies.

III

This part deals with few books that demonstrate Indian culture: Depiction of Gorkha Insurgency in Kiran Desai's "The Inheritance of Loss" Kiran Desai's Booker winning novel, *The Inheritance of Loss* is set in mid 1980s against the backdrop of this violent agitation and insurgency of GNLF (Gorkha National Liberation Front) and portraying Indians of Nepalese descent as criminals. Jhumpa Lahiri's *Gogol's Search of Identity for the Nowhere Man* is a cultural alienation and consequent loss of identity forms a central issue in the diasporic discourse. The pain of displacement continues to pinch not only the immigrants but also their children who are rendered incapable of belonging to the country of their birth. *Gogol's story* is the story of a nowhere man searching for his rightful place in his home that remains for long a place of exile is realistic demonstration. *Malgudi days* by R.K.Narayana published in 1943 is a perfect exemplification of rural Indian games and childhood of 80's and 90's.

Autobiographies have always been a mirror of Indian culture, history and events. Right from Babur's *Baburnama*, Jahangirs' *Tuzk-e-Jahangir*, Bhagat Singh's *Why I Am An Atheist*, BabaSaheb Ambedkar's *Waiting foa a Visa*, Nehru's *An Autobiography*, Gandhi's *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, Nirad C.Chaudhuri's *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, Satyajit Ray's *Jakhan Choto Chilam*, A.P.J.Abdul Kalam's *Wings of Fire*, Poolan Devi's *The Bandit Queen of India* and L.K.Advani's *My Country My Life*, Kapil Dev's *Straight from Heart*, Sachin's *Playing it my Way* and to Saurabh Duggal's *Akhada: The Authorized Biography of Mahavir Phogat* (adapted film *Dangal*) show the clear Indianness every way.

All these autobiographies are a clear and precise depiction of a person's life and culture and hardship they have faced. And these always remain as a testimony to Indian culture.

The world of fashion and culture is and has always been all films have been a mirror of fashion



dictating the fashion world from hair cut to shoes. For instance right from the Sadhana Cut, having particular styles of salwar-suits, like the anarkali, having its roots in the movie "Mughal-e-Azam" dresses and attitude of famous and popular actors have always been imitated by Indian fans. Hence Literature, Films are a part of Indian culture that are dominant or a part parcel of daily life of a layman.

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