

Adaption of Regional Language Literature to films; Words and After Words: Amrita Pritam's-'Pinjar'

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Introduction

The books are undoubtedly the chef-d'oeuvre. It cannot be duplicated or adapted and yet be better. The literary enthusiast would approve of the thought that books are better than movies made on them. Yet I would like to quote Stephen King here, "Books and Movies are like apples and oranges. They both are fruits but taste completely different." Hence the realisation and experience of both is indeed unique culture. The continuous debate over the superiority among literature or film has generated legitimate attention around the audiences and readers. However, the number of nominations and winners in the category for best adapted screen play in the academy awards indicates profoundly that film adaptations is an art in itself and must be appreciated irrespective of the precedence of its printed genesis.

The art of films got acquainted to world much later than the oral and written tradition of literature. The beginning of 19th century gave rise to celluloid emergence and within no time it created its own niche. However the other art forms had a gradual growth over centuries. The new horizons of cinematic expressions were eager to express these printed maestros through their lenses. Thus, the idiosyncratic interpretation of books popularly transformed into celluloid versions. The films have travelled along way to reach the position of today, particularly Indian cinema; it has trolled through mythologies to themes from romance and tragedies, from useless sentimental dramas to realistic social issues. India is incredibly rich in its regional literature; therefore the adaptations and influences of the literary texts are reflected on the Indian Cinema. These reflections are not mere conversion of the hundreds of printed pages into three dimensional experiences of some hundred minutes. It is the text into its context-free milieu reaching the audiences beyond the literary, linguistic or social comprehensions. "PatherPanchali' by

Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay and its classic film adaptation by Legendry Satyajit Ray is the example of the best of both the worlds. If not for 'PatherPanchali, the great piece of literature by Mr. Bandyopadhyay would have lost in translation. The film adaptation has made literature more approachable. There are numerous film adaptations from Indian regional literature which puts the question of legitimacy of these alterations on back foot.

The Influence of Literature on Hindi Cinema

Literary text have extensively adapted in Indian cinema. Movies like *Train to Pakistan* based on the novel with same name, 1947: Earth is adapted from the Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *Ice Candy Man*. The film *Parzania* is based on the novel *Fireproof* reflecting the Gujarat riots of 2002. These films straddling over a period of three decades have explored the socio-political intervals in the changing India. In the diverse country like India the regional source of literature is never ending and challenging at same time. The language specific cinema always finds the inspiration in its regional literature, like Bangali Cinema.

The Bengali cinema, too, was based primarily on Bengali works of writers who were well known, widely read, and very faithful to life in the region. Gradually, Hindi films also based on the works of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Rabindranath Tagore, Saratchandra Chatterjee, Subodh Ghosh, Bimal Mitra, and Banaphool began to be made. They reflected the ethos and sensitivities of then- united Bengal. In fact, even if some of these films were not the best Cinematic adaptations of literature, they still retained the 'colour and fragrance of the original works, thus, in essence, reflecting the sights and sounds of the land' (Ibid). Gradually, V. Shantaram's film company Prabhat films came to reflect the literary and cultural ethos of Maharashtra, while Bengal school led by New Theatres, produced several social bilinguals in Hindi and Bengali, such as *Devdas*, *Chandidas*, *President* and *Dushman*, in keeping with its literary temper. In fine, the three studio-institutions namely, New Theatres, Prabhat, and Bombay Talkies created meaningful cinema and they were appreciated by the masses as well as film critics. Eventually film maker realized the importance of subtle nuances of the language to attract the audiences. It was because of this perhaps, the film maker started bringing the untouched plethora of the country's regional literature on screen.

Page to Picture

The print and visual are intrinsically incompatible media: one is a physical sight and the other is a constructed sight through the mind that is imagination. Yet, they are in “overtly compatible” relationship in which they share a common ground benefiting each other (George Bluestone; Film: *The Metamorphoses of Fiction into Cinema*). After the adaptation these two forms share one common thing that is ‘the story’. Masses will read the successful story; each reader will see the story through his personal imagination and the words on the pages will never change. Thus novel is complete art in itself, author writes a book and readers read the book. However, adaptation becomes challenging as to rebuild an established art after dismantling it completely and yet stay true to the source as you proceed.

There are several reasons for adapting pages into picture, ranging from the film maker’s love for the story and the similarities between perception of director and author, to the belief that the story; beautifully recreated through visual scene reaches the audiences irrespective of the regional and linguistic barriers. And in contemporary scenario of the changing habits, including the insufficient reading inclinations among the millennials, seeing the book they are reading made flesh is definitely worth turning ‘page into picture’.

This paper is an overview of the adaptation and illustration taking in consideration the detached emotions of today’s generation towards the reading habits. The best way to appreciate the worth of these audio-visual treats as compare to their printed counterpart is by reviewing the classic “Pinjar- the skeleton” by Amrita Pritam and its equally impressive adaptation directed by Chandraprakash Dwivedi.

Amrita Pritam, Indian novelist, essayist and poet, wrote predominantly in Punjabi and Hindi. She is considered as the first prominent female Punjabi writer. As a novelist she is best remembered for her noted work, ‘Pinjar- the skeleton’ published in 1950. Her debut novel tells about the abduction, dislocation and loss of identity. It is a saga of pain and paroxysms experienced by the partitioned women.

Amrita Pritam has not just heard the malice of partition but witnessed it. She was aware of the agony women have undergone before, during and after the partition. This book is an outcry of those thousand women like *Pooro*, who were tortured and insulted inhumanly. The narration begins at backdrop of the communal and religious conflicts during the pre-partition Indian

subcontinent and it reflects upon the complete destruction and identity loss of the females like *Pooro*.

In the novel *Pooro*, the daughter of the money lender is taking a break from her present and recollects the past. She is a daughter of the *Sahukar* (money lender) of *Chhattovani* Village. Vivacious *Pooro* is the eldest daughter of the family, has three sisters and one brother and her mother is expecting one more child. The aura is full of the horror of Hindu-Muslim-Sikh conflict which has been made clear by the writer and director at the beginning of the art itself.

As the novel advances, *Pooro's* Marriage is fixed to the young *Ramchand*, from nearby *Rattoval* Village. Along with this the marriage of *Pooro's* younger brother is fixed to *Ramchand's* sister *Laajo*. The marriage preparations start but one day the Muslim youth *Rashid* abducts *Pooro* in bright day light and locks her up in his house on the farm outside the village. *Rashid's* family and *Sahukar's* i.e. *Pooro's* family are not in good terms but along with the confession of revenge *Rashid* confesses one more thing and that is his love for *Pooro*, he even proposes to marry her. In this dilemma of responding to treatment of her abductor's gentle behaviour, *Pooro* succeeds in escaping from the clutches of *Rashid* and returns to her parents. Her parents do not let her in. Instead they disowned her because she has been abducted by a Muslim.

Shocked *Pooro* returns to *Rashid*, marries him and starts a new life. She is renamed as '*Hamida*, surrendering her identity, now she is *Pooro* in her dreams where her parents still call her *Pooro*.

Here Amrita Pritam writes, "It was a double life. *Pooro* became *Hamida* by day and turned back *Pooro* by night. In reality she was neither *Hamida* nor *Pooro*; she was just a skeleton, without a shape or a name."

This conflict within oneself has been dramatically expressed by the author when *Pooro* is not able to accept her own child, thinking she is a part of a person who has ruined her life.

This emotional turmoil has been expressed further when, *Pooro* comes in contact with three women; *Kammo*- motherless young girl, *Tara*- depressed with her own disease and wants to end her life, who becomes a prostitute and a mad woman, who dies giving birth to the child. *Rashid* and *Pooro* bring the child home and take care of him.

The circumstances that occurred with these women change *Pooro's* opinion about *Rashid*. She strives to forget her past and move on in her imposed life, until she accompanies an elderly lady to

Ramchand's village *Rattoval*. Both of them come face to face without sharing a word and yet again Pooro returns disturbed and distracted. Story keeps moving further with Pooro's brother setting fire as an act of revenge against Rashid and partition taking the form of abduction, murders, rapes, violence and destructions. To recount the aftermath of what just appears as political decision after so many years author says, "The streets ran with blood and said to be muddled with human corpses."

Among these corpses now Pooro has to pray for her the safe being of her long lost family. The refugees of partitions were seeking shelters in the camps, where Pooro meets Ramchand. This time he tells her that his sister Laajo, who is now her brother's wife, has been abducted by the Muslims. Ramchand asks for help from Pooro to save his sister's life.

Pooro along with Rashid locates Laajo, who has been kept at her father's house. They help her escape. Laajo take shelter in Pooro's house till they get to know about the Government proclamation of returning the abducted Indians so as to bring their counter parts from India. Pooro and Rashid hand over Laajo to Ramchand and Pooro's brother. Her Brother urges Pooro to return as every family is accepting their lost ones without any regret. Here is that climax of the novel where Pooro knowing that this is her only chance to be with her people, this her only chance to regain her lost identity. But at this crucial situation Pooro's character emerged as a strong and positive. She chooses to be Hamida and says "My home is now Pakistan" and reunites with her husband Rashid and son Javed.

When she rejects what has once been denied to her by her parents- her identity as Pooro and accepts the one which has rather been thrust upon her- her own identity Hamida. Reader can experience the gradual positive change in the troubled Pooro's character during the search of Laajo. Her final decision gives the novel the ultimate of hope which otherwise lost in the malice of partition. Pooro, the protagonist of the novel emerged as the manifestation of hidden power among women thus making it realistic.

The Film 'Pinjar'... Words and after words.

A full length commercial film, released in October 2003, tells the tale of religious slits between Hindus and Muslims. This religious slit was present before Partition but had reached a monstrous height at the end of the colonial rule. It brought human morals to a piteous depth in 1947, during the time of Partition. The film reflects the dogmatic beliefs, rigid customs and traditions

attached to religious boundaries and its worst effect on the second sex. Following is the crew of the film: -

The film Pinjar, produced by Lucky Star's Entertainment Ltd. **Screenplay:** Dr. Chandraprakash Dwivedi; **Dialogues:** Amrita Pritam and Chandraprakash Dwivedi; **Choreography:** Rekha and Chinni Prakash, Bhushan Lakhandri; **Art direction and costumes:** Muneesh Sappel; **Cinematography:** Santosh Thundiyl; **Lyrics:** Gulzar; **Music:** Uttam Singh

Major Cast: Urmilla Matondkar, Manoj Bajpai, Sanjay Suri, Sandali Sinha, Priyanshu Chatterjee, Isha Koppikar, Lilette Dubey, Kulbhushan Kharbanda, Farida Jalal, Alok Nath, Sima Biswas, Dina Pathak.

Without fearing any controversy, Dwivedi has boldly handled the sensitive issue of Partition. The film starts with Poro (Urmilla Matondkar) and her family at Amritsar. Poro's family includes her father (Kulbhushan Kharbanda), her pregnant 151 mother (Lilette Dubey), her elder brother Trilok (Priyanshu Chatterjee), her younger sister Rajjo (Isha Koppikar) and a kid sister.

Chandraprakash Dwivedi, in his interview before the release of film mention that, 'Re-creation has become a habit with me.' He also said that "I wanted to make serious cinema. Serious literature fascinates me... I read Pinjar. I was sure I would be able to make it into a meaningful film.". As the theory goes a good adaption must possess certain virtues.

"A film adaptation from major literary work must possess three features

- The film should express complete acknowledgement and respect to the original novel.
- The film sees to it that 'process of transportation' from words to the audio-visual is properly evaluated
- The film should also create a film that is independent of its literary source; evolve into a work of cinematic art that reveals respect for the art of cinema" (Chatterjee.2009)

Chandraprakash Dwivedi's film Pinjar is a classic example of the apt adaptation of any literary work. The book which was the outcome of most sensitive subject of Indian subcontinent has not lost its glory in the process of transportation. Dwivedi has presented the trivial issue of partition in utmost mature manner without any apprehensions or controversies.

The film starts with Pooro (Urmilla Matondkar) and her family. Her marriage is fixed to young cultured and educated man Ramchand (Sanjay suri). Her life changes when a Muslim youth, Rashid (Manoj Bajpai) kidnaps her as an act of revenge.

There is no reference of Kammo and Tara in film. However audiences get introduced to Hindu mad women (Seema Biswas) highlighting the communal turmoil during partition represented in the process of adopting her child by a Rashid and Pooro. The omission of the characters of Tara and Kammo from film does not change the contextual requirement of supplementing Pooro's acceptance of Rashid. Hence it is acceptable. The film proceeds further without making drastic changes in the original text.

Amrita Pritam's Pinjar is an outcry of the women who are tortured, abducted and lost their identity during the process of partition. Film carries the same agony and agitation in its audio-visual form. It moves on establishing a parallel with its printed counterpart barring certain shifts in screen play to meet the audience demand.

In the process of transportation the film has every right to create its own identity. Thus the costumes, language, dialects, architectures, traditions, music and the social milieu and thinking patterns shown on screen add the authenticity to this periodic drama.

The Film and novel goes hand in hand. The best things about the adaptations are the maker gets readymade screenplay with highly elaborative characters. However the challenge is to fulfil the expectations of the readers and audiences as the genesis is already illustrated in their mind. The film Pinjar gives no such hiccups to the reader or audience for them to regret this metamorphosis.

Conclusions

As mentioned earlier the change in the recent reading patterns among the youth, the growing detachment towards the regional literature and the struggle of literature to find the place in IT enabled lifestyle, a good adaptation on big screen can be a way out to act as a bridge. The Masterpieces like Pinjar which tells the story of varied circumstances and the reactions of pre-partition and partition period which are extremely impossible to comprehend for the present generation. The film Pinjar makes it possible. The story of Love and hate, abduction, brutality, loss of identity, recovery, reconciliation and reacceptance has been present in novel by Amrita Pritam and has been recreated by Chandraprakash Dwivedi making it one of its kind.

Film adaptations of regional literature in such masterpieces can be a solution for popularising the diversified Indian literary traditions. It also places readers and audiences in pedagogic relationship with the art, hence arousing the interest in regional cinema viz-a-vizprint.

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