

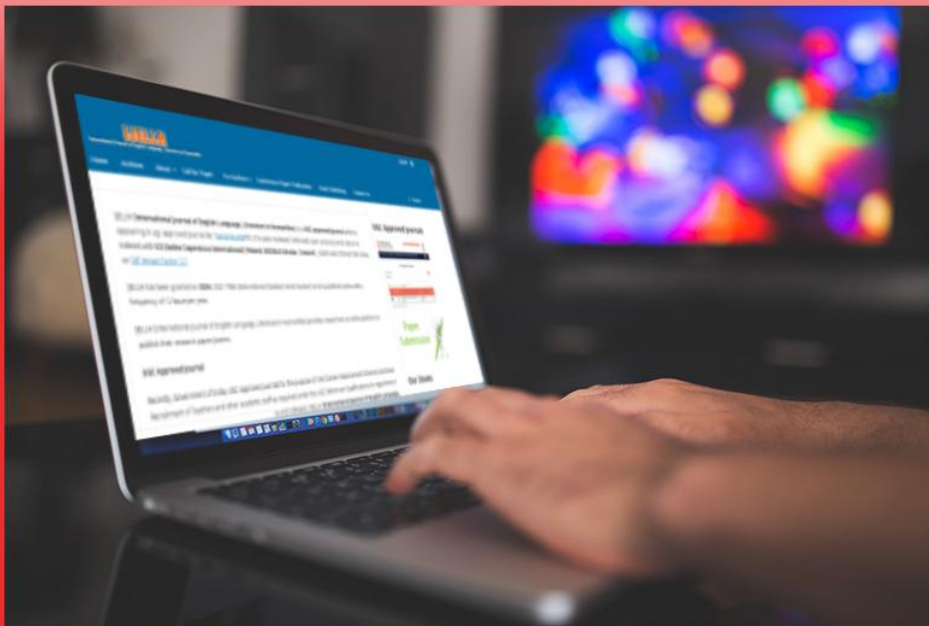
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Recasting of Literary Texts into Popular

Cinema: A Comparative Approach

Abstract: Movies play a major role in the lives of modern men. Popular movies offer entertainment and information to people. Movies are the infusion of various forms of art – writing, acting, singing, editing, music, fashion, dance and so on. The crux of any movie lies in the story or the script. Literature is one of the oldest forms of art. It embodies the aspirations of human anguishes, dreams, desires and wishes. Literature delights and teaches the readers; it echoes the culture and the history of its time; and it serves as a spiritual and moral guide. Since many of the literary works provide an excellent story board for a movie, many leading directors started shooting their movies based on written literary works. Today, almost all the world classics are turned into popular movies. The novels *Pride and Prejudice*, *Anna Karenina*, *Jane Eyre*, *Moby Dick*, *To Whom the Bell Tolls*, *War and Peace*, *Crime and Punishment*, *Oliver Twist*, *Treasure Island*, *Lord of the Flies*, *Gulliver's Travels*, *David Copperfield*, *Daisy Miller*, *Great Expectations* and hundreds of many other novels were shot into films. Almost all the science fictions were made into films. The screen play of a film will have a few modifications from the original written literary work. Since movies give visual and audio effects to a literary work, they attract more people and become popular than their original literary pieces. One good

example is J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter literary series. The literary series shot to fame only after they were filmed by Warner Bros.. Comparative literature is one of the emerging areas of research. Comparison helps one to look at the positive and negative aspects of two or more things and develop a positive outlook from it. Comparative study is done on the areas of theme, technique, characterization, genre, culture, faith, etc. Since many literary works were shot into films, comparative study between the original literary work and its adaptation of popular film is an interesting area of study.

Key words: comparatist, existentialism, globalization, Oppilakkiam, thematology

Introduction

Comparison is one of the common features of every human being. It is innate and a common instinct in every human being. Comparison is possible only when there are two or more than two. Adam and Eve did not have the chance of comparison because Adam was the only man and Eve was the only lady lived at that time. The concept of comparison is found from birth to death. As soon as a child is born, it has become a common custom among Indians to know whether the child is black or white or does it look like the father or the mother? As the child grows up, it creates a comparative approach in each and everything it does – in buying a chocolate in a shop, in watching a television channel, the food it wants to eat, the dress it likes and so on. Similarly the parents to make a lot of comparisons in the formation of their children – the school and college where the child has to study, the curricular and the co-curricular activities of the child, and many other related concerns of the child's growth. Often the parents compare the performance of their children with the performance of other children. For each and everything we make comparison. Comparison has both positive as well as negative aspects. A positive comparison will result in a positive attitude. A negative comparison will result in a negative attitude.

Comparative literature or comparative study is an emerging field of research in literature and in many other disciplines. It offers vast scope for the researchers to be original and to be creative. A comparatist brings out an innovative idea through his research and proposes a new outlook to the original text. The main purpose of comparative study is to appreciate and understand the richness and the variety found in other cultures through their literature. The book, *Introduction to the Study of Comparative literature Theory and Practice* clearly underlines the purpose of comparative study: “Comparative literature is a study in terms of comparisons and contrasts of similarities and dissimilarities of literatures and cultures and countries more than one in order to contribute to the mutual appreciation of literary experience of various peoples.” Even in Tamil literature comparative studies are carried on. In Tamil, comparative study is generally called ‘Oppilakkiam’. In short, comparative study has the noble purpose mutual appreciation and uniting people of various cultures, classes, castes and faiths.

Comparative study is done on the areas of theme, technique, characterization, genre, culture, faith, etc. Thematology is an important branch of study in comparative literature. Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English defines ‘theme’ in the following way: “topic; subject of a talk or a piece of writing”. The themes like liberation of women (*A Doll’s House*, *Emma*, *A Room of One’s Own*), quest for knowledge (*Portrait of an Artist*, *Young Man*, *Doctor Faustus*, *Prometheus*), perennial human problems (*The Perennial Philosophy*, *The Old Man and the Sea*) and existentialism (*Being and Nothingness*, *The Myth of Sisyphus*) are some of the commonest themes that are found in many literary works. Study of literary technique is another important area in comparative study. The techniques like the use of figurative language, stream of consciousness and the use of chorus and interior monologue are worth comparing. Comparison of characters is yet another important element of comparative literature. The characters like Rama, Krishna, Ulysses, Faustus, Prometheus, Hamlet, Othello and so on echo in various literary works. These set characters could be compared with other

literary character. There are many literary genres. The important ones are; fiction, fantasy, satire, tragedy, mythology, adventure, mystery, drama and elegy. A comparative study on genre is another relevant topic in comparative study. Often a literary work exhibits the culture of its time. So, a comparative study on cultural similarities and dissimilarities is an excellent area in the study of comparative literature. The study of comparative literature helps one to understand various cultures. It links one literature with another. It brings cultural unity among nations. It creates cross-cultural approach. It is an art that tries to unite humanity by appreciating and understanding the richness of a particular culture or nation.

Comparison need not necessarily be made between two or more literary works. Comparison could be made between a literary piece and any other form of art, such as paintings, sculptures, architecture, music, cinema, religion, philosophy, politics etc. Since these art forms also possess the qualities of literature, an excellent comparative study could be done by making a comparison between a literary piece and any one of the above mentioned art forms.

A comparative study like Khalil Gibran's *The Prophet* and his paintings could be explored. The real architectural marvels could be compared with that of the actual architectural wonders. There are many sculptures modelled on literature. A comparative study between sculpture and literature is yet another area in the study of comparative literature. There are many musical plays; such plays could be compared with music. Books like *The Vicar of Wakefield* written by Oliver Goldsmith can be compared with the ordeal endured by Job in the Bible.

The book *Introduction to the Study of Comparative Literature Theory and Practice* spells the purpose of comparison in the following words: "comparison aims at transcending all differences and variations by a dispassionate practice of the trade by every comparatists" (2). In order to promote the study of comparative literature some reputed organisations were formed. They include; International Comparative Literature Association (ICIA), British Comparative

Literary Association (BCLA) and American Comparative Literary Association (ACLA). All these associations aim to promote the words of Rene Wellek's 'One Art, One Literature and One Humanity'. The world has become a global village today because of the exchanges we make among ourselves – the exchanges of culture, religion, business, philosophy, literature, etc. What happens at the one corner of the world is easily available at the other end of the world. As we have merged with globalization, we are able to access all the literary works that are available.

Cinematography is one of the modern technologies which is mesmerizing the entire world with its mixture of artistic elements like music, fashion, acting, dancing, and adventure and so on. Indian film industry is one of the biggest film industries in the world. The advent of film industry has redefined the literary classics of the world. Almost all the works of William Shakespeare were shot into films and people all over the world could enjoy the great works of Shakespeare in the form of films. Most of the classics in literature have been shot into films. The cinematographic version of the literary piece is more enjoyed by the people than the real literary piece.

The eight Harry Potter films based on the novels of J. K. Rowling took the audience to the wizard world. The people who watched the film in theatres outnumbered in many hundred times than the people who read the novels. The film version of Harry Potter novels reached every nook and corner of the world. The Da Vinci Code, a thriller novel written by Dan Brown was adapted by Columbia Pictures in 2006 and it turned out to be a box-office hit all over the world. A good number of Indian novels too were adapted into films. Indira Parthasarathy's Kurithipunal was made into film with the same title by P. C. Sreeram and acted by Kamala Hassan and Arjun and it got the official entry for the 68th Academic Awards for best foreign language film.

It was quite natural that a great national event – either positive or negative would find its expression in diverse forms of art; like painting, music, songs, stories, novels, films, and the like. A few well known classics on this line are; Animal Farm, A Tale of Two Cities, War and Peace and The Naked and the Dead. The partition of the Indian sub-continent was a great historical event in India. It took away around two million lives and 14 million people were displaced. This great event was depicted both in literature and films. The noted Indian Writer Kushwant Singh wrote his well-known partition novel Train to Pakistan which was later adapted into film with the same title by Pamela Rooks. Similarly, Ice-Candy-Man, a novel written by Bapsi Sidhwa was turned into film by Deepa Mehta with the title, Earth.

There are a good number of the literary works which were adapted into films. Since both literature and film are popular art, making a comparative study on this line will be one of the important aspects of comparative literature. This paper explores a few well known literary pieces those were adapted into film.

Chemmeen is a Malayalam classic written by Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai in 1956. It was translated into English by Anita Nair. The novel centres around the popular belief of the fisher folk who lived on the coastal area of Kerala. They believed that if the wife of a fisherman was infidel while her husband was in the sea for fishing, the sea goddess, Kadamma will consume her. It was adapted into a motion picture in 1965 with the same title. Sheela and Madhu played the lead role; and it was directed by Ramu Kariat. Chemmeen reached more people through its film version than print version. The film version of Chemmeen had great appeal among audience because of its variety – the music, the songs, make-up and so on. People who were not familiar with sea, fishing and the life and dress code of fisher folk were enthralled to see the visual picture of the novel Chemmeen. In the film version, they were able to see and hear the roaring sound of the sea, alive fish and real boats. Though, the screen play for the film

was written by Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai himself, the visual effects, music, make-up and the acting made the film more popular than the novel.

Bernard Shaw's play *Pygmalion* was turned into a great musical hit film with the same title '*Pygmalion*' in 1938, later it was adapted into '*My Fair Lady*' the same play was adapted into several other films like '*Educating Rita*' in 1983, '*Pretty Woman*' in 1990, '*She's All That*' in 1999 and '*Selfie*' which came in 2014. Though, Shaw's *Pygmalion* was adapted into five different film versions, each film had its own originality and changes which created great appeal among the audience. The original play was slightly on the darker side; whereas all the film versions were comical. The addition of music in the film versions made more appealing than the original play. The plays main focus was on the teaching of phonetics; whereas the films are more focused on romantic love. In *My Fair Lady*, Henry Higgins is a lover and not a mere strict teacher without the qualities of love and respect. Similarly, Eliza is no more a submissive and obedient girl as presented in the play, she asserts her rights and stands independent in *My Fair Lady*. The ending of *My Fair Lady* is more appealing than the ending of *Pygmalion*. In *Pygmalion* Eliza leaves Henry with wounded heart, but in *My Fair Lady*, Eliza and Henry are conquered by love and they get united happily. Yet another remarkable thing added in *My Fair Lady* is the fascinating music. The music scored by Andre Previn for *My Fair Lady* backed him the Academy Award for Best Original Music Score.

Conclusion

Written literature becomes useful and meaningful only for the literate. Whereas, when a literary piece is turned into a film, it reaches all – literate as well as illiterate. India's film industry is the biggest film industry in the world. It produces nearly two thousand films a year. Since a huge number of Indians watch films, it will be a good service if many literary classics are adapted into films.

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