



Translating “Printed Texts” into the “Moving Pictures – Film”

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Abstract— *Literature is a mirror to society: a way of imparting knowledge, sharing ideas and thoughts, and bringing revolutions in the civilization. When it comes to literature, the treasure of literature lies in the vernacular language and which needs to be translated into the globally accepted language in order to make it available to each stratum of the society. Traditionally “Translation Literature” means “translating literature of one language to another language in authentic way”, however, there is a surge in research probing the parallels between translation and adaptation process. What is available in the form of printed text in one language is translated not only into the printed text in another language but also into the language of sound and moving objects. This paper attempts to examine how “Literature” in one language translated into “Cinema”. When a book is translated into the film, a scriptwriter makes certain changes by adding the essence through the appropriate dialogue: while working with language, he translates and adapts relevantly for the modern audience - translating a written text from one language into another language and the another medium.*

Keywords— *Literature, Life-skills, World of work - film industry, Cinematic adaptations.*

It's not where you take things from – it's where you take them to. – Jean-Luc Godard¹

¹ **Jean-Luc Godard** - a French-Swiss film director, screenwriter, and film critic

INTRODUCTION

English has provided the world with abundance of literature, and we can find the literature of the world translated into English. The literature has long been known as generative of other texts and of artistic response that spreads across the time and culture. The new literary texts are accumulated from systems, codes and traditions established by previous works. This means every text has connections to other texts; and every literary work, currently, at hand is a restoration, reworking and a manipulation or reinterpretation of the preceding works. These studies lead us towards translations and the adaptations of literary texts where the inspiration of source text is profoundly visible and accepted. Various deliberations of translation literature (translation of texts written in one language into another language) and the

adaptation theories (adaptation of the printed book into the different medium) seek to explore the afterlives and contributions of such practices. This paper attempts to study how written texts, unlike conventionally (translated from one language to another language), are translated from one medium to another medium i.e., into film.

ADAPTATION: IS IT AN ABUSIVE FORM OF TRANSLATION OR COMPLEMENTARY TO TRANSLATION?

The idea of adaptation has often been severely criticized as well as massively supported in the field of translation studies. Frequently, adaptation has been dismissed as an abusive form of translation and sometimes not translation at all. Nevertheless, adaptation still has possible valid solutions of translational hitches. Though, conventionally,

the adaption theories and the translation theories belong different domains, the similarities, approximations and the intercrossing are found between them. Adaptation can have a set of translative interventions; however, it may not be accepted as a translation; but is nevertheless recognized as representing an original text. Further, the history of adaptation is parasitic on historical concepts of translation. Adaptation also embraces other notions such as appropriation, domestication, imitation and reworking.

While talking about adaptation, where critics dismisses it with a negative view, many scholars recognize it as complementary to translation as well. However, this is nothing new; the initial fight over adaptation being a derogatory to translation dates back to Cicero and Horace, both of whom referred to the *interpretes* (translator) as working word for word and distinguished this method from what they saw as freer but entirely legitimate alternatives. As Bastin states the different interpretations given to the Horatian verse *Nec verbum verbo curabis reddere fidus interpretes* (and you will not render word for word [like a] faithful translator) – irrespective of whether they were for or against the word-for-word precept – effectively reveal the logic by which adaptations could be recognized.

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were the golden age of adaptation. During this period, very free translations were carried out; this was justified in terms of the need for foreign texts to be adapted to the tastes and habits of the target culture considering them to be superior. Moving ahead in nineteenth century, this liberty faced the reaction and such freedom was recognized as infidelity, nonetheless, the cinematic adaptation continued to predominate in the theatre. In the twentieth century, the proliferation of technical, scientific and commercial documents gave rise to a preference for transparency in translation, this could be seen as licensing a form of filmic adaptation which involves rewriting a text for a new readership while maintaining some form of equivalence between source and target texts.

Nevertheless, translation, traditionally, has been understood as a transmission of meaning, whereas adaptation has given it a fresh perspective of seeking to fulfil the purpose of the source text and attempts to interpret the intentions of author. The adaptation theories encourage to look beyond simply the linguistic issues and aids to shed light on the role of a translator as a creative member in the process of verbal transformation. Adaptation studies focus more on relevance rather than accuracy and entail a careful analysis of the meaning and purpose of text. The adaptation constitutes a deliberate intervention for the translator and it is a sort of creative

process that tries to strike a balance of communication that is disrupted by traditional forms of translation.

Alongside breakthrough works of Stam and Raengo (2005), Leitch (2007), Hutcheon and O’Flynn (2006), and Cattrysse (2014), Sanders’s *Adaptation and Appropriation* (2006) can be considered a classic work in adaptation studies. Though she seldom talks of translation as such, her definition of adaptation as an “...attempt to make text ‘relevant’ or easily comprehensible to new audiences and readerships via the processes of proximation and updating” (2006:19) straightforwardly applies to translation. In glossary part of her book, she defines adaptation as “... an updating or the cultural relocation of a text to bring it into greater proximity to the cultural and temporal context of readers or audiences” (ibid.:163). This definition motivates translators to abandon a more literal approach in order to safeguard the meaning, or a purpose of the source text and yet ensure the best response from the expected audience. According to, Hutcheon and O’Flynn (2006), adaptation means “... the process through which the entity or product was created (including reinterpretation and re-creation of the source) (Hutcheon and O’Flynn 2006:8–9). Further, the theories of adaptation point out that it is not just replication but also reinvention and exploration. Scholars developed the adaptation theory where intertextuality is central element which means reader is required to compare the adapted text not only with the original text but also with similar adaptation and texts in an ongoing dialogical process (Hutcheon and O’Flynn 2006:21).

ADAPTATION THEORIES AND TRANSLATION THEORIES: PARALLELISM

As Raw (2016) and Cattrysse (2014) discusses adaptation studies are currently thriving as an independent discipline and it has its own norms, it is equally important to explore the key points of translation studies alongside while practicing the novelization of a movie and rendering a poem into a song or toning down certain narrative for the young audience.

When adaptation theories showcase that it is more than mere translation; Cattrysse, in his book “*Descriptive Adaptation Studie: Epistemological and methodological issues*”, points out the basic similarities between translation and adaptation that includes the fact that both offer artefacts, both are irreversible and both draw upon the notion of equivalence (2014:47–49). Further, he dismisses the faithful/unfaithful opposition. (ibid.:244–245). To deal with concept of fidelity, he adopts a multilateral approach taking into account a “constellation” of adaptable factors (ibid.:306–307). While discussing the process of adaptation as translation, it may be referred

back to Cattrysse (1992, p. 17) who points out that considering translation as something more related to faithfulness to the original text than any other kind of adaptation is a mistake. On the other hand, adaptation as translation follows criteria of approximation and distance from the source text and hence, it is not different than the practices employed in translations.

This perspective is clearly supported by Sanders who points out: “Adaptation signals a relationship with an informing source text or original.... Appropriation frequently affects a more decisive journey away from the informing source into a wholly new cultural product and domain” (2006:26). No doubt, many scholars and critics of translation carry a negative view of cinematic adaptation and dismiss the phenomenon as a distortion, falsification or censorship; yet ample of parallelism can be found in translations and cinematic adaptation.

The concept of translation and adaptation both face the difficulties due to language as well as culture. As adaptor transforms the literature based on the modern audience, the translation literature is also affected by factors and depends on “the force that govern the decision process at a particular time” (Gentzler, 1993, p.128). Besides, Hermans (1997) also points out translation as an institutional practice connected with contradictory discursive and norm intercrossing each other. Various studies and theories in the domain point out that both the terms: “translation” and “adaptation” are not made up of univocal identity and both are dependent on contextualization. However, boundaries between both the concepts are not intrinsic.

CINEMATIC ADAPTATION: AN EXTENDED FORM OF TRANSLATION

The text provided by the language has helped a lot in the various work fields and one of them is Film Industries. Since the dawn of film industry, texts have been inspiring scriptwriters and directors to adapt the story and bringing out their creativity. In the response, the film industry has also widely been aiding in translating the texts with the audio-visual medium. A skillful translation of any text into a celluloid version of is known as “Cinematic adaptation”. Studies on process of translation of literary texts into cinema has become an important object as it attempts to analyze the achievement of a distinguished form of a very contemporary phenomenon i.e. variety of audio visual texts. According to Lefevre’s conception (1992), an important factor to foster the activity of adaptation is varied forms of rewriting that contributes to the dynamics of development of literary systems. Further, adaptation, as a kind of rewriting and translation of the source texts, affects the interaction between literary systems not only

for projecting images of write but also for introducing new elements into poetics. Based on the principles of theories discussed above, Cattrysse throws further light on adaptation theories “... translation studies and film adaptation studies are both concerned with the transformation of source text into target texts under some conditions of ‘invariance’, or equivalence (emphasis in original).”

“Cinematic adaptation” is the process undertaken to put the mental images, which arise while reading the literary text, into a visual one. This is the journey of a story which needs a collaborative endeavor, planned by director with the help of scriptwriter, dialogue-writer, producer, camera personnel and technical aid. Anyone who works on masterpiece is motivated by the urge to transform a story from a classic to “new” for contemporary audience. The film industry is doing the highly skill-needed task of “translating” a written work into a feature film, where the persons with the innate talent of writing out a script from the story, directing out the imaginations sharpen their skills with the help of literature provided by the earlier writers. As Andre Bazin says, transforming a text into film is translations from one language to another language (i.e. linguistic medium to a visual medium). George Bluestone called it a new work of art, where adapter was the creator. We can say that the process of transformation allows to choose the best approach to an understanding of the similarities and differences that exist between these two modes of representation i.e. film and literature.

CINEMATIC ADAPTATION: TRANSLATING TEXTS INTO FILMS

The literature of antiquity has provided endless inspiration for cinematic adaptations. The first known adapted film was *Cinderella* based on Brother Grimm’s story with the same name, produced in 1899 by George Melles² and by the year 2015, there have been 14 versions of the same story being adapted. This trend has captured the attention of filmmakers soon thereafter. The Academy Awards, probably considered to be the ultimate validation when it comes to cinema, also recognizes a category for ‘Best Adapted Screenplay’ (since 1928) in itself tells us that making films out of books (short stories, novels, comics, drama) is a well-established and lucrative proposition. Looking back at the 2013 Oscars, the most talked about films *Life of Pi* and *Argo* have been successful book adaptations and in 2014, *The Great Gatsby*, which took over almost all the categories, has also been a book

² Georges Melles was a French illusionist and filmmaker who led many technical and narrative developments during the earlier days of cinema.

adaptation. Cinematic adaptations of Hollywood are path breaking in many ways but the glimpse of history of Bollywood showcases that Indian cinema has its own way of adapting the literary texts. Over the decades, Bollywood has been inspired by World classics and has adapted them for many a super hit film. If we take a glance on last decade starting from 2005 up to now, numbers of English books have inspired the scriptwriters of Bollywood to adapt the story or basic theme into the film.

When any Bollywood scriptwriter takes an English book for adaptation, it requires technical, linguistic, semiotic skills as well as the depth knowledge of English language and various cultures. The writer is not only adapting the story and the characters but also translating the wholesome literature written in foreign language into Indian languages. The dialogue writers as well need the skills regarding languages and their vocabulary to translate the literal dialogues as well as the emotions. When any book gets adapted, the scriptwriter and dialogue-writer of the film work mainly with the language – translating one language into another, translating one medium into another. The novel or story with which scriptwriter works is a final product, but the screenplay is only a blueprint that communicates with the overall vision of the movie. Adaptation takes an activist stance toward their source novels by inserting them into much broader intertextual dialogism, i.e., generating the other text in the context of source text: "... faithfulness to a form, literary or otherwise, is illusory: what matters is the *equivalence in meaning of the forms.*"

The scriptwriter has a greater responsibility of translating the foreign language into the one relevant to the modern audience. The basic skills that any scriptwriter requires are the excellent writing ability, story-telling skills with the understanding of dramatic structures. Adapting the book into a film is not feeding the pages into a projector; rather it requires scriptwriter's ability to tell the story with the images. The task of scriptwriter is refashioning the spirit of the story regardless to the language in which it is originally written.

We can find few examples where Indian directors and scriptwriters take the basic theme or an idea of book to *Indianise* it. Audio-visual interpretation of the book in Indian context is a norm of Bollywood. For instance, while writing down the script for *Omkaara*, Vishal Bharadwaj and Abhishek Chaubay stay loyal to the basic elements of the story in *Othello*, but transplant the action from Venice and Cyprus to a rural town in India, turn Othello, a dark Moorish general among Italians, into Omkaara, a gangster in the employ of the local leader/jailbird candidate Bhai-saab. Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* has

been a benchmark for playwrights and filmmakers, and Bollywood has made umpteen *desi* adaptations of the immortal love story over the decades: *Ishaaq* (2007), *Ram-Leela* (2013). *Ishaqzaade* (2012) has been presented as modern India's *Romeo and Juliet*. In both mediums, the lovers from rival families are destined to have a tragic end, but the simple setting of Indian background allows the same story to be more than just simply retold. The depth and relevance in *Ishaqzaade* are due to the transformation of Romeo into a rapist if only to emphasize to a modern audience that this is not simply a straightforward romance. Russian and American literatures, such as, Dostoevsky's *White Nights* and O Henry's *The Last Leaf*, have also encouraged Indian scriptwriters and directors to adapt the stories as *Saawariya* (2007) and *Lootera* (2013) respectively. *Namesake* (2006), *Blue Umbrella* (2007), *Aisha* (2010), *10ml Love* (2010), *7 Khoon Maaf* (2011), *Haider* (2014) *Fitoor* (2016) etc. are the Bollywood projects for which the scriptwriters picked up an English book and translated the book for the modern Indian audience.

As the paper is aligned with my PhD Thesis - Domesticating the Foreign Literature into Native Cinema and I have tried to study the film *Great Expectations*; how adept linguistic skills of the scriptwriter and dialogue-writer transforms English book of Victorian Era into the Hindi film of Modern India. The huge task of adapting a novel into a two- hour movie is a big challenge in itself, and it is even more difficult when the completely non-Indian work is made "purely Indian". Rather than copying the work verbatim, Abhishek Kapoor and Supratik Sen, the screenplay writers of *Fitoor* added the Indian essence in their work where Supratik Sen has poured the same kind of western emotions through the dialogues in the native language. The task that Abhishek Kapoor and Supratik Sen has done exhibits their knowledge of literature, their wide exposure to the varied cultures of the world, and their in-depth studies of English as well as the Indian languages. The heart and soul of *Great Expectation* is a basic tale of love and heartbreak that can be related by any people belonging to any country or place; and *Fitoor* is an Indian version of the same tale.

Great Expectations is plucked out of the marshes of Kent and Genteel London and transplanted into the Valley of Kashmir and high society art scene of New Delhi. The movie, instead of being created as a full-scale costume drama, is filmed as an update that actualizes the novel easily passing off as a work of contemporary period. The ballroom dances and etiquette of eighteenth-century London are now the discos and high-society manners of modern Delhi. As locale of the movie has been shifted to Kashmir, social-political issues of Kashmir pop up on the

screen. Unlike in the original novel, here Noor (aka Pip) confronts a terrorist Moazam (aka Magwitch) in the opening scene. The change seems convincing as Kashmir is affected less by convicts and more by terrorists. Bomb blast is not new for Kashmiris, and hence instead of a mysterious murder, the reason of death of Noor's sister turns out to be a bomb-blast. In the movie, Firdaus is engaged to a Pakistani diplomat and the relation between him and an heiress in Kashmir raises the issue of India-Pakistan.

While converting (translation of people and culture) the English people into Kashmiri Indian, the blend of Kashmiri-Muslim culture can be seen where the characters are named in Arabic having the essence of their characteristics.

The male character is named Noor means 'a halo' in Arabic, which is in sharp contrast with his real existence as he is a poor orphan boy with no such *noor* in his life. Firdaus, meaning 'paradise' or 'Heaven' in Arabic, is his female counterpart. In the novel, Firdaus was Estella meaning 'a star', star only shines but beyond reaches. She and Firdaus are also beyond the reach of Pip and Noor respectively. Miss Havisham appears as Begum Hazrat in the movie. Hazrat means 'presence' and so does Begum. Her mere presence makes a difference in life of Noor, although negative, turning his life upside down. Magwitch who turns as Moazam, meaning respectable, changes Noor's life, but contradictorily turns out to be a terrorist and not a respectable person. The other meaning of Moazam is 'a half-God' and he proves to be a Godlike in Noor's life playing the role of being his benefactor, by turning him into a renowned international artist.

The glimpses of Kashmiri-Muslim-Indian culture appears through the costumes and the languages as well. Supratik Sen stages his well-versed Hindi-Urdu language through dialogues. The dialogues of Hindi movie contain a touch Arabic and Urdu in order to give it the poetic charm. Urdu infused Hindi dialogues like "main aur meri aalishan mahobbat", meaning "I and my magnificent love" are *Indianising* essence of movie. The study of *Fitoor* thus shows how the world of Indian Film Industry takes its inspiration from the English literary world, and transforms it with Indian essence.

The whole study of adaptation process says a lot about "translation": in conventional translation literature, the adept skill of the source language and the language in which book is being translated is required; whereas when it comes to translating a book into film, the writer needs the apt skill of language as well as the culture and emotions of the people - the readers of the books and the spectators of the movie.

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