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Literature's Role in Inspiration and Development of Indian Cinema

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Introduction

Before the invention of cinema, literature was the leading medium of entertainment for the masses. With the magic of words, readers travelled along: be it places, emotions or the experience itself. Literature has everything endless as the mind. From the time cinema was invented, people were keen to see the known and heard stories to meet up the real visualizations of their imagination. The imagination that they derived with their respective minds about the popular stories they read or heard.

Originally, the history of motion picture-making began 1890 onwards. Initially, which produced soundless moving-pictures and later around 1927 the audio-visual development took place. Rest is the history by itself. Post 1913 with Dada Phalke's enthusiastic actions Indian Cinema nurtured itself eventually.

The regional or the folk theatre, which mainly exhibited the folk-stories, popular myths or epics, was also thriving to reach up the masses. Cinema provided a huge bridge between both of these. People's easiest expectations were to see and feel the stories they could relate to in all the manners. Slowly cinema took a hand on that and it always tried to adapt the popular taste along with the artistic and creative approach of cinematic representation.

Not only India but the global cinema as well has been inspiring with the literature. India has produced cinematic masterpieces with the adaptations and inspirations from the literature. Such adaptations are as old as history of cinema itself. Very first Indian film was based on the mythical story of Raja Harishchandra.

Book-to-Film

Though writing a screenplay is a complete different set of work compared to writing a book. The filmmaking process and expert hands has succeeded with this art-form in bringing it to a common platform. Starting from the Indian cinematic history till date there have been enormous examples of eccentric adaptations of literary work into the filming world.

Looking at another angle the purpose of literary work and film making isn't different at level of experience. Films give and easier hold to audio and visual senses whereas literature solely relies on the phenomena of imagination that writer takes a reader to. Filming enrolls the aspects of music, songs, dance, etc that enriches



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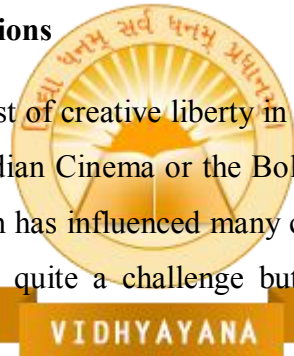
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the experience of the spectator, making it a democratic art form. The comfort and leisure of multi-sense experience that a motion-picture delivers is highly opted by masses in current century be it of any purpose-knowledge, entertainment, information etc. Moreover, the diversified nature of India, its bubbling ambiance bustling colours and inevitable contradictions have formed a captivating backdrop that has also tempted international filmmakers to work over it.

From the beginning of film making in India many creative directorial hands have been trying the fascinating adaptations of literature; classics, narratives, short-stories, religious stories, popular myths and much more. Adapting a novel into a movie is a big challenge in itself as accommodating the story to fit in the time length messes up the whole essence of the original art sometimes. Consequently, there have been so many movie adaptations that haven't worked well on the box-office despite being inspired from some famous works of literature. However, still there are some classics that have been embraced by both the critics and the audience.

Down the line Adaptations and Inspirations

Though all the film-makers have taken best of creative liberty in adapting the literary works, there are many setting up the phenomenal example in Indian Cinema or the Bollywood we dearly call it. There have been some quite legendary literary works which has influenced many cine-makers over the time line for the same piece of work. Filming a masterpiece is quite a challenge but many directors added fragrance to such masterpieces.



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'Guide' which was screened at Cannes Film Festival 2007 is the popular adaptation of R.K. Narayan's work. This work fairly illustrated complex human emotions where a guide falls in love with a married woman, lands up in jail and ultimately gets over the spiritual path. The intricate drama was made way beyond its time.

Satyajit Ray's major film works like 'Pathar Panchali', 'Apar Sansar' etc were made from the prevalent influences of Bengali and Hindi writers. Later in 1960s and 70s, Gulshan Nanda's literary art became an inspiration for several hit films like 'Kati Patang', 'Sawan Ki Ghata', 'Neel Kamal', 'PattharKeSanam', 'Khilona', 'JheelKeUsPaar', 'Sharmilee', 'Jugnu' etc.

Devdasis one such legendary work originally written by Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay that tempted many filmmakers. It has been adapted in many different languages. In 1935 Pramathesh Barua and Bimal Roy made the movie on the novel in 1955. Sanjay Leela Bhansali represented it as an epic love story and high-



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end dramatic representation in 2002. Dev.D2009 is the modernized new-age version of the same work with a twisted setup in the current era by Anurag Kashyap.

Another influencer Sahib Bibi Aur Ghulam, 1962 is the adaption of Bimal Mitra's Bengali novel 'Saheb Bibi Golam'. Story of a lovelorn who becomes an alcoholic pinning for her husband. Setup into the backdrop of Bengali aristocracy during pre-independence made a great commercial success.

Parineeta again Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay's finest work adapted to-be a film in 1953 by Bimal Roy. Again in 2005 it was retouched by Pradeep Sarkar as Bollywood musical. The title means a married woman. A love story between an orphan girl and her wealthy next door neighbour, their love is tested with the malicious intentions of the society.

Pygmalion the play of legendary playwright George Bernard Shaw, titled this play after a Greek mythological figure. It was first presented on stage to the public in 1913. In 1976, it was adapted as a Gujarati film 'Santu Rangili', which was a great move of that era. The story revolved around training a bedraggled girl to an elite way of life.

'Umrao Jaan' 1981 is also a period film adapted by Muzaffar Ali from an Urdu novel Umrao Jaan Adna penned by Mirza Hadi Ruswa. Story based on the life of a famous Lucknow courtesan won the hearts of Indian cinema viewers. Again same film was been made in 2006 with new cast and approach by J.P. Dutta.

'**Ek Chadar Maili Si**', not so widely known adaptation of Rajinder Singh Bedi's Sahitya Akademi Award winning, classic Urdu novella, of the same name.

Rabindranath Tagore is the Bengali name known beyond the boundaries of India. One of his greatest works 'Chokher Bali' is adopted as the film with same title under the direction of Rituparno Ghosh, director of the Bengali origin.

'Saraswatichandra', again one of the legendary works divided into four huge volumes by Gujarati writer Govardhanram Madhavram Tripathi has been adapted into the film with the same name in 1968. Again in 2014-2015 same platform was presented as a soap opera on the Indian Television.

'Shatranj Ke Khiladi' (The Chess Players) was adapted in 1977 as film by Bengali director Satyajit Ray originally based on Munshi Premchand's short story of the same name. Premchand also made the Urdu version titled Shatranj Ki Bazi of the same story.



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‘Junoon’ in 1978 is adapted by ShyamBenegal from Ruskin Bond's fictional novella, A Flight of Pigeons, set around the Indian Rebellion of 1857.

‘Pinjar’ 2003 directed by Chandra Prakash Dwivedi based on a Punjabi novel of the same name written by Amrita Pritam, power packed story-teller. Movie sets the picture of the communal war between Hindu and Muslims around the partition of India. A Hindu woman, who gets abducted by a Muslim man, soon, she finds herself not only forced into a marriage, but also living in a new country as the borders between India and Pakistan are drawn.

‘English, August’ written by Upamanyu Chatterjee, the story representing a humorous study of bureaucracy in India. It shows the dislocation that someone who has grown up in urban India feels when in rural India, adapted as a film by Dev Benegal in 1994.

‘Black Friday’ film revolving around the 1993 Bombay blasts is based on the novel written by S. HussainZaidi and directed by AnuragKashyap depicting the explicit recreation of one of the most dreadful terror acts committed in India.

‘Nagamandala’, GirishKarnad’s popular work is adapted in Kannada directed by T.S. Nagabharana in 1997. The film is named after a Dakshina Kannada's ritual called Nagamandala.

‘Train to Pakistan’ is a 1998 film adapted from Khushwant Singh's 1956 classic novel by the same name set in the Partition of India of 1947 and directed by Pamela Rooks. The film is one of the most anticipated adaptations of its time, especially being writer Khushwant Singh's most acclaimed work.

‘Bride and Prejudice’ released in 2004, the romantic drama directed by Gurinder Chadhais Bollywood -style adaptation of Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen; primarily filmed in English followed with some Hindi and Punjabi dialogues, making it a multilingual film.

Current Adaptations

Looking at the current trending commercial cinema of India adaptations have empowered a lot. Anurag Kashyap’s ‘Bombay Velvet’ 2015 is based on a novel called Mumbai Fables. Story of a boxer set in 1960's Mumbai, presenting how dreams are made in the city of Mumbai.

Chetan Bhagat, the most popular Indian writer these days has almost all of his books adapted as films by different directors. His peppy stories of contemporary youth of India and their life perspectives is something



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that interests the Indian audiences with a great appeal.² States a 2014 out-and-out Bollywood movie with the same book title presents the story of two IIM intellectuals with different background. 'Hello' based on One Night at Call Centre, '3 Idiots' based on 5 Point Someone directed by Raju Hirani, 'Kai Po Che' on 3 Mistakes of My Life directed by young and talented Abhishek Kapoor. Chetan Bhagat's grey cells have given not one, not two, not three, but four Bollywood movies: two of these being mega-blockbusters.

Among several recognized and awarded adaptations of literature into cinema, the Oscar winning Slum dog Millionaire in 2008 based on Vikas Swarup's fiction work Q and A covered huge international platform with an Indian backdrop. Though the film story was modified to a huge extent yet the whole concept of the film was adapted.

Rajneeti a 2010 Indian political thriller drama co-written, directed and produced by [Prakash Jha](#) can be perceived as a modern-day adaptation of the epic Mahabharata.

Umesh Shukla's recent 2012 film 'OMG – Oh My God!', a satirical-comedy, which has revolutionized the thoughts of people on religion and has conveyed a strong messages to the society regarding religion and popular faiths prevailing, has been based on his own play Kishan Vs Kanhaiya. It was remade in Telugu as [Gopala Gopala](#) in 2014 and in Kannada titled as [Mukunda Murari](#) in 2016.

International Adaptations of Literature

Indian cinema has not only adapted the stories that belonged to India but it has also worked on popular global literature.

'Tere Mere Sapne' the film directed by Vijay Anand is based on the novel 'The Citadel' by A. J. Cronin in 1971; also, made as a Bengali film 'Jiban Saikate' in 1972 by Swadesh Sarkar. Again was remade in Telugu as Madhura Swapnam in the year 1982 by K. Raghavendra Rao. 'Omkara' is the Indianized adaption of none other than the great English legend Shakespeare's Othello from the 17th century by Vishal Bhardwaj. Similarly, 'Maqbool' set in the backdrop of the Mumbai underworld is based on play Macbeth got widely appreciated for its execution and stellar performances. 'The Blue Umbrella' is an adaption from Ruskin Bond's novel by Ruskin Bond made by again Vishal Bharadwaj. A simple tale of an innocent kid from a small village in whose most prized possession, a blue umbrella, gets stolen by the richest man in the village. Bharadwaj's 'Haider' released in 2015 is also an adaptation of William Shakespeare's great play Hamlet, represented with a total new backdrop but with the original



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Shakespearean essence.

'Sawariya' the poetic drama directed by Sanjay Leela Bhansali is the adaptation of Russian White Nights by Fyodor Dostoevsky. 'Aisha' 2010 a light story based on actually a lifted and twisted form of Jane Austen's novel, Emma. 'Lootera' is a 2013 period romance directed by Vikramaditya Motwane that is partly based on author O. Henry's 1907 short story The Last Leaf.

Indian Cinema's Literary Adaptations by Non-Residential Indian Filmmakers

Also the Non-Residential Indian filmmakers residing abroad have been attracted to the Indian roots and the rich stories. Deepa Mehta well known artistic depicter of the films has made many movies with Indian backdrop in foreign lands and Indian subcontinent as well. '1947: Earth' released in 1998, critically acclaimed commercial is based on Bapsi Sidhwa's novel Cracking India. Her another onscreen adaptation of Salman Rushdie's acclaimed novel, *Midnight's Children*, which employs magical realism to chronicle the ups and downs in the lives of its key protagonists born on India's Independence Day with special powers.

Mira Nair another lady director of immense potential adapted Jhumpa Lahiri's 'The Namesake' 2007. The touching saga of immigrant Bengali parents trying to adjust to life in alien America and at its core, a poignant father-son relationship and the search for identity when torn between two worlds.

Television's Stand in adaptations of Literature

Not only big screen Indian TV soap operas have also been inspired and adapted many epics like Mahabharat, Ramayan and other great mythological literary works. But TV is yet to match up the true beautification of the Literature. Past had certain essence with R.K Narayan's 'Malgudi Days' by director Shankar Nag. Lately on television there have been popular works like 'Tarak Mehta ka Ulta Chashma', 'Lapta Gunj', 'R. K. Laxman Ki Duniya' etc which are comparatively fine adaptations of good literature but the better work is yet to see.

Conclusion

Literature has always kept on inspiring and influencing the film makers and the list is endless. Films or books both have been revolutionary story-telling and depicting mediums just with the difference of the experience. Over the years, film production houses and filmmakers have realized the eminent potential of the literary creations contemplating their fabled inspirations making it a book-to-film. Literature is an important component of cinema, the foundation of audio-visual depiction. There is no denying the fact that



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cinema is for the masses, and an adaptation of a piece of literature for cinema is a treatise to convert the class for the expectations of masses. It is wished and believed that Indian Cinema has always flourished with the book-to-film adaptations and will continue to add up the fragrance by filming the great literary works.



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