

## **SCREENING LITERATURE: REPRESENTATION AND COMPARISON OF GENDER IN THREE FILMS ADAPTED FROM LITERARY TEXTS**

**Vineet Sandhu**  
Research Scholar  
Department of English  
IGNOU  
New Delhi, India

Any art of written work, themes of heroism, friendship, loss or quest for eternal life can be considered as literature. It can be factual imagination as well as on original Imagination. Considering the central theme of comparative literature is the literature of two and more linguistic, cultural or national groups. It ranges the inquiry of comparisons of different types of art. Literary criticism and its history can be approached with the help of comparative literature. The review of such criticism will bring into light the important phases of literary relationship.

In the present paper, I have made an attempt to demonstrate and compare some important literary texts when adapted into cinematic texts, especially in the main stream cinema, major changes in representation take place. The term ‘representation’ refers to the ability to evoke a vivid impression of presence through words and figures of speech which involves making things bright and striking and thus stimulating to an audience’s imagination. As Davi Cavallaro observes “The empiricist approach to representation proposes a distinction between the ways in which we interpret nature and the ways in which we speculate about nature”.

Feminist philosophers present alternative views about the construction of women as subjects of knowledge, vision and pleasure. Feminist film theory is a theoretical work within film criticism which derives from feminist politics and feminist theory. Feminist have taken many different approaches to the analysis of cinema .Theses include discussions of the functions of women characters in particular film narratives or in particular genres , such as film noir where a woman character can be often seen to embody a subversive sexuality that is dangerous to men and is ultimately punished with death.

The three films studied here are Rudali, Bride and Prejudice and Parineeta . Rudali is based on Mahashweta Devi’s short story of the same name which treats the issues of survival, class and caste in feudal society where women are exploited and suffer the most. Gurinder Chadha’s Bride and Prejudice represents middle class dream of economic salvation in the first world America and cultural negotiation through her film. This film is based on Jane Austen’s famous novel, Pride and Prejudice. Vidhu Vinod Chopra’s Parineeta is a film based on Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay’s novella which treats the issue of caste contradiction and economic concern especially as faced by women in India.

Mahashweta Devi’s ‘Rudali’ tells the story of poor women’s survival through the tale of two women who master an unusual profession of conducting elaborate lamentation as part of the death rituals of the dead rich. Paradoxically, this gives the poor women their first taste of independence. The action and vocation of ‘rudali’ is now politicized and is not just a means of survival but also becomes an instrument of empowerment a subaltern tool of justice and revenge.

Gurinder Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice* and Jane Austen's '*Pride and Prejudice*' the principle theme of both the film and novel is matrimony. Prudent mothers sitting and discussing business of match making for their daughters, beautiful girls dressed up elegantly to impress handsome young bachelors of rich families. Both the novel and the film is representation and treatment of the issues of womanhood.

*Parineeta* as a film is an adaptation of the novel to create a commercial cinematic text while keeping the eye on requirement of the market. Issues like dowry, child marriage, class conflict are pushed to background. The study of the film against the novel makes an interesting comparison particularly from the feminist point of view. The film does not become an anti-feminist approach of the novel but it significantly dilutes the central importance of child bride's status and anguish. This is done by a major rewriting of a literary text into the form of a cinematic text produces as a commodity for patriarchal consumption in the present day India.

Literary adaptation to film is a long established tradition in cinema but has recently becomes a marketing ploy by which producers and directors can legitimize cinema-going as an activity of 'taste' and thus attract the middle classes to cinema halls. Literary adaptation are supposed to give to cinema the respectable label of entertainment as art.

The variety of cinematic uses to which the three films have been put indicates something very important. Literature can be both reduced to a commodity and a light pastime and it can be creatively used by an aware film maker.

Thus a critical study of films is important because films are major source of cultural influence worldwide. When a film is based on a literary text, it is all the more important to study it critically because now both the film and the literary text lead a double life. In this double life, the issues of representation and its politics get complicated and foregrounded. The comparison between the film and the novel obviously answer to the useful frameworks provided to us by gender studies, especially feminism, in the form of liberal, socialist, materialist and cultural study perspectives. It is interesting to see the recycling of an important vernacular literary text, written in the mode of social realism, into an entertainment commodity, from which all distributing and questioning insights of the novelist have entirely disappeared.

### **Works Cited**

- Austen, J. (1995). *Pride and Prejudice*. New York, Modern Library
- Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Second Sex*. 1949. Trans. & Ed. H.M. Parshley. London: Vintage, 1997. Print
- Devi, Mahasweta. *Rudali*. Trans. Anjum Katyal. Calcutta: Seagull, 1990.
- Devi, Shakuntala. *Caste System in India*. Jaipur: Pointer Publisher, 1999.
- Ganguly, Swagato. "Introduction". In *Parineeta* by Saratchandra Chattopadhyay. New Delhi: Marxism and Literature. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977. Penguin Books, 2005. (English translation)
- Spivak, Gayatri. Foreword. *Breast Stories*. By Mahasweta Devi. Calcutta: Seagull, 2002.