



THE MOVIE PARINEETA: A TRANSCREATION

ARUNDHATI TARAFDAR
Department of English,
Central University of Rajasthan,
Kishangarh (RAJ) INDIA

DR. ARPANA JHA
Assistant Professor,
Department of English,
Central University of Rajasthan,
Kishangarh (RAJ) INDIA

ABSTRACT

To get inspired and produce a new work has been a common phenomena, 'adaptation' is one such phenomena. 'Adaptation' is not only a process, but also the product of the process (just like 'translation'). According to its dictionary meaning, "to adapt" is to adjust, to modify, to make suitable. Being a part of 'intertextuality', adaptation is seen in the genre of 'Films' too. Works of literature have been adapted for film from the dawn of the industry. A cinematic adaptation is the transfer of a written work, in whole or in part, to a feature film. Some of the earliest examples come from the work of Georges Méliès, who pioneered many film techniques.

A common form of cinematic adaptation is by transcribing a novel into a feature film. Apart from novels there are also non-fiction, autobiography, comic books, scriptures, plays, historical sources, and even other films. The present paper concerns with a Bengali novella - Parineeta written by Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, adapted into a movie 'Parineeta' (The Married Woman) in 2005, directed by debutant Pradeep Sarkar, based upon a screenplay by the film's producer, Vidhu Vinod Chopra.

It is said that 'Adaptation' is repetition, but a repetition devoid of replication (Hutcheon, 2006). The adapted film "Parineeta" exemplifies this saying. The Novella being a literary saga, readers and movie spectators relate themselves to the novella. But the film maker invented new characters, even created stories that were not present in the source text, to spice the plot, which in turn made the targeted text (movie) even better to the audience of twenty-first century. The very first image going through the last few lines make us feel that the 'movie' might face issues like 'infidelity'. But to defend the script, we would like to quote Sfetcu (2011), "Change in adaptation is essential and practically unavoidable, mandated both by the constraints of time and medium, but how much is always a balance", and therefore we cannot criticize Chopra for the changes, because it was "essential and practically unavoidable", mainly due to the 'era' when the movie was released. Not only Sfetcu there are also some film theorists who have argued that the source novel of the story or plot for a film should not be of prime concern for a director as both are two different works of art and must be accepted as separate entities by themselves. There are also theorists who argue that the



purpose of a film adaptation is to make changes or adapt all the while being close to the aesthetics of a novel or the theme of the novel or the message of the novel. As such, the film maker must introduce changes where necessary to fit the demands of time and to maximize faithfulness along one of these axes.

The 2005 movie, Parineeta, concerns with both the elements of keeping the 'novel as a novel' and 'film as a film'. It also merges a few more elements, to call the movie a 'transcreation': creating, a new 'target text' without killing the essence of the 'source text'. The script writer beautifully merges the Novella set in 1914 Bengal with the movie set in 1962.

To consider the 2005 movie as an adaptation, we need to know the definition (or the forms) of adaptation. For our analysis we consider Hutcheon's (2006) definition of 'Adaptation' from three distinct but interrelated perspectives. According to her, adaptation can be seen as a 'formal entity'. An adaptation is announced as an extensive transportation of a particular work or works; it's a "transcoding" which involve a shift of medium, or a change and therefore a shift in context. Telling the same story from different point of view can create a manifestly different interpretation. In the film Parineeta, the flash back works to give the whole story of Shekhar and Lalita from Shekhar's point of view which was not found in the text. Secondly, as a process of creation, the act of adaptation always involves both reinterpretation and recreation. Linda (2006) argues that adaptation involves "both appropriation and salvaging, depending on your perspective." For Parineeta, the script writer rescues the plot of a 1914 society and brilliantly 'recreates' a plot that suits a 1962 movie setting, which can be perceived by 2005 and later audience. Thirdly, adaptation is seen from the perspective of its process of reception; as being intertextual in the sense of different adaptations of a work resonating in our memory through repetition, but of course, with variation. The movie Parineeta, therefore, bears the responsibility to keep the novella alive, resonating in our memory through repetition but with variation, thereby, making adaptation "a derivative that is not derivative- a work that is second without being secondary" in Hutcheon's views.

The Plots Of Novella And The Film: A Comparison

By Linda's arguments we can analyse the adapted movie Parineeta even with a better vision; making it not a 'secondary' but a 'primary' text. The Novella- Parineeta takes place at the turn of the 20th century during the Bengal Renaissance. The story has multiple plots, but we are citing only the important factors that build the story. The story centres on a poor thirteen-year-old orphan girl, Lalita, who lives with her uncle Gurucharan. Gurucharan has five daughters, but with the birth of a 'girl child', a father starts counting and saving his income for dowry. The same happens with Gurucharan; the expense of paying for each dowry forces him to take loan from his neighbor, Nabin Roy. Roy's son Shekhar, is a twenty five-year-old



successful lawyer who is very dear to Lalita and Lalita is seen calling him 'Shekhar da'(brother). Shekhar as per his age is shown to be mature, sensible and very quiet, while Lalita is suitable for being a girl of thirteen years. With the developing plot the characters mould accordingly; especially with the introduction of Girin, a student who is the uncle of Lalita's friend, Charubala (her mother's cousin). Girin is infatuated with Lalita; he with his sister and others plays card with Lalita-even bets to get a treat in clubs. This development in the relationship between Girin and Lalita is not tolerated by Shekhar. But he hardly shows his annoyance due to his affection towards Lalita, and allows her to visit the clubs, which she denies acknowledging the anger.

The plot takes a twist when Annakali (daughter of Gurucharan) arranges her doll's marriage on one fine evening, which is supposed to be so auspicious on that day that even exchanging of garlands (which is a part of wedding) is equivalent to marriage. Shekhar, who is jealous of Girin accepts the garland of Lalita as marriage and asks her to consider him as her better half. Then he leaves with his mother for an outing. Meanwhile Girin helps Gurucharan repay the loan to Nabin Roy. Girin, Charubala and the rest of their family are Brahmos and Girin exerts a great deal of influence over Lalita's family. Girin helps Gurucharan repay the loan to Nabin Roy. He also convinces Gurucharan to convert himself and his family from Hinduism to Brahmoism as it forbade the giving of dowry in a marriage (a move which so enrages Nabin Roy that he builds a wall between the two houses). As a love triangle develops between Girin, Shekhar, and Lalita, tragedy ensues in the wake of a number of misunderstandings. But finally all the misunderstandings are solved when Girin after four years (of garland exchanging) says that he was married to one of the daughters of Gurucharan and not Lalita, who was already married. Shekhar accepts her as his wife and asked his (widow) mother to accept her too.

The film featured Vidya Balan (Lalita), Saif Ali Khan (Shekhar) and Sanjay Dutt (Girish) in the lead roles. Raima Sen plays supporting role of Lalita's bubbly and talkative cousin, Sabyasachi Chakrabarty the pivotal role of Shekhar's father, Diya Mirza, with a cameo appearance as Shekhar's fiancé and Rekha, with a cameo performance of a night club (Moulin Rouge) singer. 'Parineeta' the movie, primarily revolves around the lead characters, Lalita and Shekhar. Since childhood, Shekhar and Lalita have been friends and slowly this friendship blossoms into love. A series of misunderstandings surface and they are separated with the conniving schemes of Shekhar's father. The plot deepens with the arrival of Girish who supports Lalita's family. Eventually, the knots of misunderstandings get detangled, Shekhar's love defies his father's greed and he finally seeks Lalita by breaking the wall which was built by his father, to show the rift between the two families.

Changes in plot: What and why



Being an adaptation, 'Parineeta', the movie goes through the process of 'borrowing', 'intersecting', 'fidelity' and 'transformation' as followed by any other adaptation follows. The movie 'borrows' or captures the title of the original text, as well as the characters and the theme, thereby, giving an "expression of the original modulated by the peculiar beam of cinema" (Dudley, 2012).

Robert Stam (2000) in his essay 'Beyond Fidelity' observes that adaptation is a metaphoric process of translation. And if we are talking of translation, we must say that 'Translation' is a mode, which helps in dissemination of culture and knowledge. 'Translation' is not an imitation; it is creation; it is a rebirth, re-incarnation of a text. And by going through the understanding of translation, Robert Stam is not wrong in his observation about 'adaptation' being a process of 'translation'. Just as in the case of translation, with adaptation comes the question of 'fidelity'. We are questioned whether the 'spirit' of the source text is kept or not. With respect to the movie, the 'spirit' remains the same because the main plot remains the same. There are transformations, we can say, but it keeps the 'spirit' of the source text, or rather it is better to say that it adds to the aesthetics of the target text, which becomes suitable for the 21st century audience (see Sfetcu, discussed earlier).

As such, it can be inferred that the story line of the movie is same with that of the novella but the characters, the time period and even the destiny of the characters are changed (especially the fate of Nabin Roy) in the movie according to the exigency of the audience. These changes make the movie a form of transcreation. This is true that while translating few essence of the source text evaporates, but as Salman Rushdie (1991) observes, "It is normally supposed that something always gets lost in translation; ... something can also be gained". This movie, being a process of translation, gifts its audience with a renewed 'essence' and the essence is 'gained' by the audience.

The novella concentrated mainly on "marriage" and Lalita in particular, whereas the film is focussed mainly on Shekhar, who is changed from a lawyer (in the novella) to a male protagonist engrossed in music. This is true that Shekhar's dedication to his passion of music and composition of music is very active. But there is a flaw in his character. He is very passive and unaware of his cardinal duties. This character is in high contrast with Lalita, a mature girl with her own dignities and knowledge about her duties. Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay needed to portray the then Bengali society and changes that were happening in the society (mainly regarding 'Hindu' and 'Bramho Samaj' beliefs and clash). He for that reason, characterized an influencing character Girin, who supported Bramho Samaj introduced by Raja Ram Mohan Roy and the belief of that Samaj discarded polynism and believed in the real teaching of the Vedas. The author of the novella showed a rift between the two religions-another being "Hinduism" which tried to support the caste system and



considered Brahmins superior and believed in polynism. This depiction of rift between two religious viewpoints was also a common feature in the works of other writers of that era. This rift was not needed in the movie due to the change in the society and, therefore, the script writer easily omitted the back-story of Girish (Girin).

Apart from this, there are various prominent changes in the movie concerning the age group of the protagonists. The novella projected the protagonists (Shekhar and Lalita) with a vivid age gap (of twelve years). But in the movie we find that both the characters are almost of similar age, giving a more supporting romantic background to a 2005 and later audience. We find inclusion of various other characters, like Shekhar's friend Ajit, who is a common friend of both the protagonists and who supports both of them, without being biased. We even find the marriage of Charu (a neighbouring friend of Lalita) which acts as a logical support to the unique marriage of Shekhar and Lalita. In the novella, the author portrays a setting where Lalita's cousin is seen preparing her 'doll's marriage'. She refers that the day is very auspicious and even the exchange of garland will conclude the holy matrimony. This thickens the plot of the novella and the garland exchange of the protagonists is welcomed by the reader keeping in mind the time period. But a doll's marriage on an auspicious day resulting in holy matrimony would not be convincing for 21st century audience, which was very much accepted in 1914s. In that era a doll's marriage had all the rituals that was practiced in an original marriage and, therefore, the reader could easily accept the marriage of Shekhar and Lalita getting 'married', which had to be logically changed by the script writer of the movie; and so it was done.

The script writer and the editor must be given a round of applause because they did a great job to make the movie spectator friendly. Apart from the 'recreation' part we get to see a huge camera and editing work that makes the movie more palatable and explains the characters with its cinematic techniques. The scene where the title of the movie is showcased, we find a lady getting ready as a 'married woman' with red bindi and sindur on her parted hair. As she pulls her 'pallu' on her head, the title 'Parineeta' appears. This is significant as it reveals the meaning of the title 'Parineeta', "a married woman" and also introduces the leading character Lalita. We also find a mastery of editing work done in few more scenes, which helps the spectators to build an impression of the characters portrayed in the movie. For instance, the scene after the song 'Piyu bole Piya bole', Shekhar in response to Lalita, at the end of the scene says,
"Hisab kitab aur mein?" (Me and accounts?).

The very next scene starts with a 'close up' shot of Nabin Roy in his cabin uttering,

"Sara khel hi hisab kitab ki hai." (Everything is about maintaining a proper account),



portraying the differing mentality and outlook of the father and his son.

The contrast of characters are also brought to effect by editing and dialogue while picturing Gayatri and Lalita, the two 'eligible spinster' for Shekhar. On Shekhar's visit to Gayatri's birthday party, on the orders of Nabin Roy, Gayatri is shown ornamented by aristocracy, mirroring the artificiality of Nabin Roy, a contrast to Shekhar. Not only this, the scene where she cuts the Flurys' cake and boastfully says that she doesn't know how to boil even water, is beautifully juxtaposed with Lalita's preparation of cake, symbolizing Lalita's simplicity and the gap between the two 'classes'.

Being the central character we observe Shekhar going through a great change in his attitude (perfect for a round character), and this change can be perceived by his dialogue. The carefree lad, in the first place calls himself as "Not a business man, a musician". But getting polluted by the ploy of his father, his attitude mirrors his father. In another scene, he is shown to call for the servant (just like his father) and after entering the house, he hands him over the coat exactly like his father. When Gayatri says "For a musician it was terrific", he corrects her and responds, "Not a musician, Sirf ek (only a) businessman".

The image of Lalita is that of a modern independent girl who loves Shekhar, but will not change herself for him. The scene where she wears high heels of her cousin shows her jealousy towards Gayatri. But her actions are not repeated later, she rather refuses to wear it. At another instance, she has a job in Nabin Roy's office, where she comes to know about the ploy of Nabin Roy. The novella presented the death of Nabin Roy, which might have been deliberately changed by the script writer to trash the stagnant hypocrisy and pride of Nabin Roy and that is the reason his son breaks the wall to shatter his father's so-called rules and pride.

A club song was included in the movie to give the essence of the 'club culture' of 1960's. We also find Shekhar's mother in contrast to the bold characterization of mother in the novella. The novella portrays a mother who suggests her son to visit his would-be spouse's house to see his wife, even though Nabin Roy did not approve of it. Later she is the only guardian who holds the responsibilities of the Roy family. Whereas the movie presents a mother who is fragile in front of her arrogant and proud husband, Nabin Roy. She cannot protest against her husband, neither can Shekhar protest against his father. When Nabin Roy orders Shekhar to visit Gayatri's birthday party, she can do nothing. Her information of Shekhar's reluctance to her husband is futile to Nabin Roy's decision. He rules over Roy Family. But later, in the climax of the movie we find a bolder mother, just like we find a more mature and bold Shekhar. She bursts out with a rebellious spirit, supporting and evoking Shekhar to break the wall built by Nabin Roy.



Conclusion

We find two different protagonists compared to the source text. This change was necessary with the changing times. 'Parineeta' the movie exemplifies cross-culture reception and meanings that different audiences invest in films. The audience of 21st century could never connect with the characters set by Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay in his novella. As a result, several prominent changes were made in the movie. We break free the world of young Lalita (in the novella) to a modern working girl, Lalita; with it we also enter the care free world of Shekhar in the movie. All these changes were necessary. Although the external cover goes through the process of change, yet the soul remains unchanged. Thus, 'Parineeta' the movie not exemplifies adaptation at its best but also sets an example for the adaptation of a source text into a target text, thereby, transcreating a literary saga.

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