

Ice-Candy-Man And 1947 Earth: A Hybrid Presentation Of Literary And Visual Texts

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Abstract: Bapsi Sidhwa's novel Ice-Candy-Man (a literary text) and its adaption into a film Earth (a visual text) by Deepa Mehta is an excellent example of a hybrid representation. Deepa Mehta made a film based on a novel. Screening a novel into a film is not a mean task. It requires a tremendous talent for a director to turn words into moving images. As the novel Ice-Candy-Man undergoes transformation into a film Earth, there is shift in narratology. In making Earth, Deepa Mehta sets herself a daunting task, equipped with cinematic tools and artistry in transforming Sidhwa's brilliant novel Ice-Candy-Man into a film. This transformation of a novel to a film is not just an extraction of dialogues from pages of books. Adapting a novel into a film is very elaborate, complex, ornate and high priced process. It involves a collaboration of several people such as director, script writer, cinematographer, musician, singers, set designers, distributors and most importantly the actors. Keeping all these in mind an utmost care is taken while making a film. A little lapse while transforming a novel into a film on the part of film-maker can destroy the entire project. Therefore what is to be added discarded and altered are very crucial issues taken into considerations. In this paper an attempt is made to find out the reasons and implications of this metamorphosis of a literary text into a visual text.

Keywords: *Literary Text, visual Text, adaptation, fidelity, cinematic tools, sexual maturation, recovery.*

I. INTRODUCTION

A film is a movie cousin of a novel and both of these tell a story. However, they possess separate entities. Birth and growth of film as an art has been deeply influenced by different literary genres especially by novels. In the beginning, the films almost solely depended on the novels for the source material. The relation between film and novel is probably more than hundred years old. In fact, there is an endless list of novels which have been adapted into the films. In this regard film scholar Michael Wood observes: "A Film is a cinematographic representation of a story, drama, episode, event, etc. that is shaped, angled, finite, intended, whether it is a document or an art installation, a bit of gritty realism, or a full blown fantasy." (p. 114) There are shining examples of films that are inspired from the novels while there are others which have butchered the novels from where they have been adapted. In this paper a deep insight is made to explore and analyze the different aspects of adaptation with special focus

on *Ice-Candy-Man* (1988) by Bapsi Sidhwa and its metamorphosis into a film the *Earth* (1998) by Deepa Mehta. The Paper aims to find out the answers of the following:

- ✓ What inspires Mehta to make a film based on a novel written by Sidhwa?
- ✓ What are the changes, if any, in the film?
- ✓ What are the inclusions and exclusions made in the film?
- ✓ Do these additions and deletions have any socio-cultural, psychological, gender-centered, historical, economic and technical overtones?
- ✓ Who are the target audience of Sidhwa and Mehta?
- ✓ Does the film adversely affect the novel from where it is adapted or it gives another life to the novel?
- ✓ How are women characters portrayed in the novel and the film?
- ✓ Beginning and ending of the novel and the film? The discussion proceeds with these questions in mind.

Commenting on the influence of literature on the films, eminent film scholar Edwin McDowell writes in 'The York

Times' (14 July 1985): "One in fifty novels published in this country were optioned by Hollywood." (1) Film in the present day world has become one of the most popular mediums. Today film and literature has become a serious academic pursuit. According to Louis D. Giannetti, "The overwhelming bulk of what's been written about the relationship of film and literature is open to serious question" (89) The relationships, resemblances and differences between the proposed texts need to be examined. The points which need to be analyzed are:

A. SCREENING OF LITERARY TEXT INTO A VISUAL TEXT: A MAMMOTH TASK

Screening a novel into a film is not a mean task. It requires a tremendous talent for a director to turn words into moving images. Dore Schary, a noted and writer and film producer is right when he argues that the screen writer's task is to sit down and word by word create images. As the novel *Ice-Candy-Man* undergoes transformation into a film *Earth*, there is shift in narratology. In making *Earth*, Deepa Mehta sets herself a daunting task, equipped with cinematic tools and artistry in transforming Sidhwa's brilliant novel *Ice-Candy-Man* into a film. Transformation of a novel (a literary text) to a film (visual text) is not just an extraction of dialogues from pages of books. Adapting a novel into a film is very elaborate, complex, ornate and high priced process. It involves a collaboration of several people such as director, script writer, cinematographer, musician, singers, set designers, distributors and most importantly the actors. Keeping all these in mind an utmost care is taken while making a film. A little lapse while transforming a novel into a film on the part of film-maker can destroy the entire project. Some important points of similarities and differences between the two are:

A. MEDIUM OF COMMUNICATION

The Language employed by Sidhwa in writing the novel is typically educated English of the British era interwoven with Punjabi. She opted to write in English because the novel was meant for global readers. She chose to write in English but with frequent use of Urdu and Punjabi phrases. It gave the novel a local flavor and genuineness. She also uses Parsi proverbs in her other works. "Sidhwa feels that her writing style is influenced by her manner of speaking, which she calls a "salad of languages" (Dhawan and Kapadia 13). Some words used in Hindi, Urdu and Punjabi are: *Phulka (miniaturechappatis), arreybaba, paranthas, sarkar, granthi, swaraj, angrez, salaamalekum, mamajee, choorail, pakora, churidar, gulabjamun, jalebi, chichi, pahailwan, hullagoolla, janab, raj-karega-khalsa, akirahina koi, kirpan, sat sriakal! Bolay so nihaal!, 'Allahaoakbar, yaaaaali, yaar, tamasha, paan, ladoo, baraat, ghongat, sehra, doolha, chuddr, nimakharam.* She freely employed Punjabi and Urdu slangs and phrases and even sentences to give a real aroma of the then Lahore. But her choice to write in English was abandoned by Mehta in her film *1947: Earth*. Mehta uses Hindi as medium of communication. Hindi is the language of masses. It is spoken in India and is understandable in Pakistan and even in Bangladesh. Unlike the novel, the film is a medium of masses. Novel is medium of literate and elite section of

society, while a film is a mass medium catering to the needs of all. Mehta made the film in Hindi unlike that of her counterpart.

B. LENNY'S GROWTH AND HER SEXUAL MATURATION

Lenny's growth and maturation is another important feature of Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man*. This is in fact a very audacious attempt on the part of Sidhwa to describe the process of a girl's sexual maturation in the country like Pakistan. Commenting on this Subhash Chandra says that it is no mean achievement on Sidhwa's part to depict the process of sexual maturation of a young girl while living in the country like Pakistan where measure of freedom for women is considerably less than in India. Lenny observes her everyday life, including the things she is not supposed to know. She watches stub-handed beggars, holy men, hawkers, cart - drivers, coolies, cooks, cyclists and all sorts of men throwing covetous glances at Ayah. But the film due to time constraint is unable to show the sexual maturation of Lenny.

C. DEPICTION OF VENGEANCE TAKEN ON WOMEN'S BODY DURING THE TIME OF PARTITION

Ice-Candy-Man is the novel that attracts interests on several accounts. It is a novel dealing with the theme of partition. Sidhwa depicts the events of partition in their naked cruelty. It depicts the callousness that was inflicted by males on the females during the times of partition. The stories of defeats and triumphs were celebrated with vengeance on a women's body. Sidhwa has done a commendable job in bringing the deep rooted religious, political, social, cultural and economic tensions to the surface. *Ice-Candy-Man* as a novel presents the history of partition in a miniature scale. Ayah is portrayed as the worst victim of the partition in both the novel as well as in the film. She is abducted by the mob led by the man who once loved her. She was ravished and raped by the hoodlums. She is the victim of male aggression. Deepa Mehta's film depicted Ayah as the final victim of the partition. But the fright of partition is somewhat eased in the film by giving an emphasis on the romantic element. Ayah-Hassan relationship is wonderfully portrayed in the film. This attempt on the part of Mehta is certainly praise worthy. The inclusion of romantic element in the film eases the prevalent tension. Here Mehta seems to score points for the film as it is adapted from the novel.

D. IS ICE-CANDY-MAN AS AN IMPARTIAL PARTITION DOCUMENT?

Ice-Candy-Man is an impartial representation of partition. It is written in 277 pages and traces the history of events leading to partition and also gives an account of Lahore preceding the partition. Being Parsi, she portrayed her characters impartially without any favour or disfavour, sitting on a fence. Nevertheless to regard this novel as completely impartial is unfair. She seems to give a slight edge to the Pakistani perspective. Politically she appears to have her

deepest sympathy for Pakistan. But on the other hand the film version of the novel is more inclined to represent Hindu perspective. Since the film was made for Indian audience, it favoured Indian point of view. But broadly the film too is an impartial representation as it is hued more in romantic colour. *Earth's* in fact a very courageous and humane film by Deepa Mehta. Stating about the film Stephen Holding says that *Earth* is, "a powerful and disturbing reminder of how a civilization can suddenly crack under certain pressures." (6)

E. *ICE-CANDY-MAN* AND *EARTH*: ADDITIONS AND OMISSIONS

Mehta's adaptation of *Ice-Candy-Man* into the film *Earth* has many interesting additions as well as omissions. Novel and film are two different mediums. Characters in the novel come to us through language whereas characters in the film come to us through visual images. Commenting about this film, commentator, Michael Orme states, "We cannot transpose any one character from page to screen and hope to present him entirely as the novelist created him or the novelist's public knew him...who can really recall, having seen a screen performance which really and truly portrayed his favourite character as he knew it" (368). In her selection, Mehta excludes certain female characters such as Slave sister, Godmother, Electric Aunt and Hamida. The film adaptation tends to sacrifice "extra" characters from the novel. It also ignores some important conversation of the novel A whole section called "Ranna's story" which describes the bodily suffering of a Muslim boy and occupies substantial importance in the novel, is reduced to an insignificant short narrative by a nameless boy at the camp in the film. Mehta excludes some other characters, but retains some of their scenes and assigns those to other characters.

F. USE OF LITERARY TOOLS IN THE NOVEL AND CINEMATIC TOOLS IN THE FILM

Both the '*Ice-Candy-Man*' and the film '*Earth*' use different tools to express the same idea. The novel uses tools such as symbol, simile, metaphor, allusion, paradox, irony whereas film uses various cinematic tools such as frame, shot, freeze, fades, color, light, sound, songs, voice-overs etc. As the novel *Ice-Candy-Man* is adapted into the film *Earth* certain changes are inevitable as there is a shift in the medium. Both Sidhwa and Mehta used very effectively the different tools in their novel and films respectively.

G. USE OF VOICE-OVER IN THE FILM

Mehta uses a female voice-over of Shabana Azmi for Lenny, the narrator in the novel *Ice-Candy-Man* (1998). As the cast is introduced, first the word *Earth* appears on the screen followed by 1947. Lenny is sitting in the chair with the map of India in front of her and is found scribbling with crayons on the map. The female voice-over of Shabana Azmi sounds: "I was eight years old, living in Lahore in March 1947 when British Empire in India started to collapse. Along with talks of India's Independence from British came rumbling about its division into two countries, Pakistan and India.

Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs who had lived together as one entity for centuries suddenly started to clamour for pieces of India for themselves. The arbitrary line of division to British control to carve up India in August 1947 would scar the sub-continent forever". (Earth) Another voice-over of Shabana Azmi as an old Lenny plays at the end of the film after Ayah's abduction. It sounds: Two hundred and fifty years of British Empire ended in 1947. But what is there to show except for a country divided. The massacres and kidnapping vendettas and more violence, was it all worth? Fifty years have gone by since I betrayed my Ayah, Some say she married to Ice-Candy-Man, some say they saw her in a brothel in Lahore, others say they saw her in Amritsar. But I never set eyes on her again. And that day in 1947, when I lost Ayah, I lost large part of myself. (Mehta). These are the last lines of the film coming from the voice-over of Shabana Azmi (older Lenny). It cannot be denied that certain omissions become essential to translate a novel to the screen due to the difference between written and visually auditory media.

H. *EARTH* THE FILM AS A SLICE OF THE NOVEL *ICE-CANDY-MAN*

The film *Earth* is a smaller version of the text from where it is inspired. We see a kind of condensation of the characters in the film. The novel represents the Lahore of 40s and 50s in detail. We can relive the then Lahore in the pages of *Ice-Candy-Man* whereas the film does not delve into it because of its time as well as other limitations. Sidhwa reveals the time of pre-partition, partition and post-partition while Mehta focuses more on the partition aspect. Sidhwa describes the events and characters through words while Mehta uses moving images in her portrayal of the characters and incidences. The film *Earth* omits the first 60 pages of the novel and straightway leads to the ensuing danger of partition at the dinner party. Chunks of the novel are excluded from the film. Despite squeezing 277 pages novel into a film of 101 minutes, Mehta had been very faithful in representing the historical events that figure the setting of the story – the partition.

I. ABSENCE OF HEALING AND RECOVERY PROCESS IN THE FILM *EARTH*

The film *Earth* focuses on the two aspects; The Cracking of India and the violence that followed. The third aspect which gives emphasis on the healing process is absent in the film while the novel brings to light the resilience of the women and their fight to resist male dominance. All the women characters like Ayah, Mother, Godmother, Mucho, Slave Sister, Lenny and Hamida represent a way of life that in one way or the other challenges the patriarchal repressiveness. They display extraordinary resilience and undaunted spirit during nerve shattering episode of partition. Godmother plays a very vital role in the novel after Ayah's abduction. She becomes the force to reckon with. As Lenny states, "No baby - not even a kitten - is delivered within the sphere of her influence without her becoming instantly aware of its existence" (ICM 210). She emerges as the most influential character after Ayah's kidnapping. Sidhwa's narrative speaks of this process of recovery but Mehta's film does not. *Earth* the film, omits the

last 90 pages of the novel, the portion that followed the abduction of Ayah (Shanta), bringing in the recovery and rehabilitation of hapless women. By concluding the story of Shanta where she does, Deepa Mehta underscores the futility of all so called 'recovery' or healing operations. She says that once the sanctity of a woman has been defiled, so to speak, can there be any going back? Can one make amends? Can the clock be turned back? Is any form of redress or compensation enough for the loss suffered by woman? In other words, after such a transgression, what forgiveness? But contrary to film, the novel deals with recovery and rehabilitation of the victims, certainly a very soothing experience for the reader.

J. EARTH REDUCES THE LARGER ISSUE OF SEXUALITY TO VIOLENCE

It is Lenny, the protagonist of the novel who narrates the whole story of partition stained in violence. She witnessed not only the barbarity, exploitation and brutalities inflicted on women but also observe the emotional, religious, political and historical drama of riot in the history of mankind personally. As a child she could understand the man's lascivious debasing attention towards women. The woman is merely reduced as an object of man's sexual gratification. *Ice-Candy-Man* in fact, a saga of women's exploitation, suppression and marginalization in the male dominated patriarchal society. *Ice-Candy-Man* exposes how man falls to the level of beasts to establish his masculine power. The novel depicts the resilience and endurance the women demonstrated during the time of untold adversity. Sidhwa choosing Lenny, as the narrator of the novel is quite a bold step. She describes the brutality of partition with chilling veracity. Like the author, Lenny is stricken with polio and is extremely observant narrator though at times her understanding is limited by her childlike innocence. As Jahanzeb Jahan comments: "Bapsi Sidhwa delicately threads the story of an 8 year old girl named Lenny with the din of violence ready to crash around her world as the partition moves from political planning to reality. The story is told in the present tense as the events unfold before the young girls' eyes though moments of an older Lenny looking back are apparent".(slideshare.net/jahanzebjahan) By making Lenny the narrator, Sidhwa displayed undaunting faith in her own sex. She took the side of women she was representing in her novel.

K. ENDING OF THE NOVEL AND THE FILM

The film ends abruptly without the rescue of Ayah, leaving the audience to worry about the terrible fate Ayah befalls. The spectators come out of the cinema hall thinking about Ayah. She was not to be rescued in the film; therefore the character of Godmother was deleted from the film. Godmother is the great source and facilitator of female resistance in the novel. Wiping out Godmother from the film certainly raises the question of fidelity to the original text. The film is not an exact copy of the novel. Despite all this, a credit must be given to Deepa Mehta for keeping the plot intact. It kept the basic spirit of the novel intact. Sometimes director uses his own imagination and simply takes a novel as a jumping-off point. At others he may copy the original novel in

a dogged way and yet fail to capture the true spirit of the original novel. Echoing similar views Macdonald and Macdonald observe: "A film can be faithful to the details and totally empty of the author's wit, irony, satire and meaning" (4). However, Mehta's film is other way round. It captured the true spirit of the novel despite having made certain changes. Fidelity is not the only criteria to evaluate a film transformed from the novel.

II. CONCLUSION

Despite having used different medium of expression, both Sidhwa and Deepa attained similar results. They are the artists of common goal. Both the artists give voice to the female victims during partition. Both focus on feminine point of view. In the novel as well as in the film women are at the centre. Both Sidhwa and Mehta are transnational artists. Sidhwa belongs not only to Pakistan, India and the US but to the world. So does Deepa Mehta, as Richard Phillip her interviewer writes about her that she is a citizen-filmmaker of the world. Not an Indian, not a Canadian either. Though she was born in Amritsar, moved with her family to New Delhi where she graduated in Philosophy, currently lives in Canada and belongs to the world. Both the novel and the film i.e. *Ice-Candy-Man* and *Earth* share several similarities. The spirit and the soul of the novel has been beautifully depicted by Mehta. Both Sidhwa and Mehta are the champion of women's cause. They have immense respect for each other. Both are inspired by the other's work. The partition of India is the key theme of both the novel as well as the film. Both could not keep their eyes shut to the 1947 partition which resulted in the world's biggest human migration accompanied by ethnic violence, kidnappings, killings and rapes. Both championed for women's cause but with different tools. Sidhwa uses the flair of her pen and Mehta the magic of her camera.

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