

FROM TEXT TO FILM: WITH REFERENCE TO *THE NAMESAKE*

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The interrelationship between the art forms is into practice since ages. Plato has rightly said in his theory of *Mimesis*, that every art is an imitation. The art is always considered to be inspirational; poet gets inspired by Muse and puts his words on paper, painter gets inspired by imagination and paint and writer gets impulse and writes. Film Adaptation is one such art emerging in the field of literature which is inspired by the written text. It gives ‘motion’ to the word written on paper. Though both the forms of arts-written text and film are different, there coexists the relationship between them as it is an adaptation of the original. This paper intends to study the journey of a text to film with reference to *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri.

Evaluating a film, it can be seen through the perspective of writing, visual arts, performative arts, editing and direction; wherein writing includes story, screenplay, dialogues and lyric. Unlike the elements of text, film does consist of all the elements such as setting, plot, conflict, character, point of view and theme. The difference is basically the form which changes from image or picture to ‘motion picture’. The treatment of the text is to create an imaginary world in the mind of the readers, whereas, the film, through motion picture displays the same imaginary world on the screen. The writer creates the world on the paper and the director does the same thing with the help of all the cinematographic techniques. It is brought to the viewer in the visual mode; which heightens the aesthetic value of any work by the tools of music, scenes, effort of compare and contrast, background scenes, camera work etc. In print media, we see the limitation of imagination, while in visual mode, there is freedom of imagination. There always arises a question, why to adapt any written text and convert in to a movie? The answer to this question would probably be, every form of art carries uniqueness within. If at all somewhere there is any gap or limitation found, it can be filled by the other work of art. The treatment of any work of art can be changed but not the basic theme of it will be vanished. The literary texts nevertheless carry all the technical aspect of its respective genre.

Jhumpa Lahiri’s ‘The Namesake’ has an adaptation with the same title, a film by Mira Nair which nearly justifies the original text.

Original Plot:

Plot of the novel begins in 1968 with the protagonist of the novel Ashima Ganguly- a newly wedded lady who has recently migrated to Cambridge, Massachusetts from Calcutta, India to embark upon a new chapter of her life. Readers have been informed that she is expecting a baby and then she has been taken to hospital in the taxi. Her husband Ashoke admits her in the hospital and waits outside in the lounge with other husband. While inside the room, the American nurse Patty looks after her. Ashima becomes nostalgic and remembers the day when her first met Ashoke, how she slider her feet in his shoes before entering the room. It was their first meeting. She did not even know the name of Ashoke until they got engaged. Their marriage

was traditional Bengali marriage and immediately after that they shifted to Cambridge. After their marriage, they started knowing each other slowly and their love blossomed over a period of time.

After introducing readers to the character of Ashima, Lahiri introduces readers further with the character of Ashoke. In the lounge, Ashoke is reading the magazine. He recalls his childhood and his passion for reading when he was a reading and how his grandfather introduced him to the works of major Russian writers. He also becomes nostalgic and remembers his terrifying train journey of 1961 when he was on his way back from Jamshedpur after collecting books inherited by his grandfather. Another minor but significant character of Ghosh- a middle aged businessman, has been introduced during train journey. While he was reading a collection of short stories by famous Russian writer Nikolai Gogol. Ashoke and Ghose has a brief conversation but it had a very significant impact on Ashoke's life. Ghosh advised him to travel and explore the world as much as he could before getting married. At midnight, most of other passengers were sleeping but Ashoke was still reading stories in the dim light of the train bogie. Suddenly something unimagined and unexpected happened. Train engine and several bogies derailed. Ashoke was flung into field nearby. He was injured badly but was alive and later he was rescued because of the cover of the book he was still holding. It attracted rescue's attention. After recovering slowly from injury, he decided to join engineering school in USA.

Next morning, Ashima gave birth to a baby boy. Couple decided to wait to name the boy till a letter arrives from India. However, they had to name the baby to complete the formalities of the hospital. Couple decided to choose a pet name. Ashoke names boy: Gogol- the author he cherished most and has changed his life forever.

When couple and a boy reached home from hospital, they were welcomed by the family of their landlord: Alan and Judy Montgomery and their two daughters- Amber and Clover. After a brief break resumes work and Ashima takes care of Gogol at home. She communicates with her family in Calcutta through mails. In November of that year she was informed that her grandmother has a stroke.

After six months, couple decides to organize a rice ceremony for Gogol when he will be fed his first solid food. Bengali friends of the couple attends the ceremony. As a part of the custom, Gogol was offered some drill, a dollar bill and a ballpoint pen. Whatever out of these three he chooses indicates his future profession. Interestingly he did not choose any of the three. Ashima and Ashoke decided to visit Calcutta when Gogol turned a year old. Six weeks before their departure, Ashima gets extremely sad news of her father's demise of cardiac arrest from her brother Rana. Grief stricken Ashima pre-pones trip to attend the funeral.

Now plot moves to 1971. Gangulis have shifted from rented apartment from Harvard Square to a university campus outside Boston. Ashoke is an assistant professor in electrical engineering. He is quite happy with his academic progress but on the other hand Ashima feels more alienated and lonely since they have moved away from their Bengali friends. After two more years they purchased their own house on Pemberton Road. When Gogol turned five, Ashima became pregnant again. This phase is very difficult for Ashima as she was alone and spends most of the time alone when Ashoke is away at work.

Gogol reached school late on first day as Ashima was too sick to drive him to school. Gangulis informs the principal, Mrs. Lapidus to refer to Gogol as his formal name- Nikhil. However, when she overhears couple referring the kid as Gogol, she asks him about his preference. He chooses Gogol to be his identity for rest of his schooling. In May, Ashima gives birth to second child-Sonia. By now Gangulis have made many Bengali friends in neighborhood

and meet them over dinner on weekends. Elders prefers Bengali food and converse in Bengali but kids would watch movie in one of the bedrooms. When Sonia turns seven months, couple organizes her rice ceremony. Sonia refuses all the food which was offered to her.

Plot proceeds further, readers have been informed that in few years time, both parents of Ashoke and mother of Ashima dies. Ashoke introduces Gogol to the writings of the author after whom he has been named. Gogol does not mind his name until one day when his class takes a trip to a cemetery when he was eleven. Gogol realizes that he will never find any other person named Gogol while he was rubbing of the gravestone's surface. He makes rubbings of the unusual names only since he could relate to those names.

In 1982 Gogol turned fourteen. To celebrate the occasion, Gangulis planned a huge party. Ashoke gifted him *The Short Stories of Nikolai Gogol*. Gogol is more interested Beatles than book. Ashoke tried to explain about the train incident and how it made him appreciate author. In 1983, Gangulis goes to Calcutta for eight months while Ashoke is up for sabbatical at the university. When they reached there, kids are not comfortable and spend most of the time inside the house. During this period they visited Taj Mahal and Delhi. After returning to USA, their lives resumes back to normal.

During Gogol's junior year of high school, English teacher Mr. Lawson assigns the class to read 'The Overcoat' by Nikolai Gogol. Gogol came to know about the person life about the writer Gogol. He learns that writer Gogol had a miserable life and it embarrassed Gogol in front of his classmates. After this incident he decides to change his name to Nikhil. When he meets a girl named Kim, he introduces himself as Nikhil. Kim is the first girl he kisses. Before joining college in Yale, he legally changes his name. When his parents came to about this, they were not happy with his decision and reacts negatively. But feels better and different living as Nikhil than Gogol.

At Yale, Gogol presents himself as a Nikhil. During sophomore year, he meets a meets a girl named Ruth in train on his way back home for Thanksgiving. They develops liking for each other and when they reach back to college after a break, they starts dating. Ruth goes to study at Oxford in England during the spring of sophomore year. They remain in touch via letter but when she comes back they break up. On next Thanksgiving, Gogol his train gets late because of suicide on track. Worried Ashoke shares his own experience of train accident which he has suffered in India. After reaching home, Ashoke explains whole incident and reason behind naming him Gogol. Gogol questions that if his name still reminds him about that horrifying experience to that Ashoke replied 'everything that followed'.

1994, New York. Gogol has started working as an architect and lives alone in an apartment. He meets Maxanie Ratliff in a party one night. Both spend time together all night, and the next day she introduces him ti her parents. Her parents, Lydia and Gerald, are very rich and their way of interaction is casual but intelligent which Gogol finds quite opposite in comparison with his own parents. He develops liking for her home and her parents also and begins spending most of his time at their home.

Gogol and Maxine gets an opportunity to spend time alone at her home when her parents go to their lake house during summer. He spends his spare time with her and stops visiting his own parents. Even when Ashoke leaves for Cleveland for nine months, Gogol just stops by to his home for lunch and then goes to Maxine's parents lake house without spending time with his parents.

Ashima has never lived alone before this time but now when Ashoke is away for nine months and both children are on their own, she starts working at the public library and develops

new friendships. This is the time when Ashima becomes independent for the first time. One afternoon Ashoke calls Ashima that he is not feeling well and has pain in stomach. He reaches hospital on his own. After two hours, when worried Ashima calls hospital she has been informed that Ashoke has 'expired' due to a massive heart attack. Gogol flies back home next morning when he comes to know from her sister. Gogol goes to Ohio to identify and claim Ashoke's body. Gogol decides to sleep at his father's apartment instead of hotel as he misses him. Next morning he reaches Boston to be with his family. Many people have gathered to mourn death. Gangulis performed a religious ceremony to mark the end of the mourning period. When Maxine comes to meet Gogol, he feels distant emotionally from her. Family decides to spend festivals together then Gogol returns to his work while Sonia stays with Ashima. After few months. Gogol breaks up with Maxine and focus on his registration exam to be licensed architect. Sonia continues to live with Ashima at their Boston home.

Gogol calls Moushumi Mazoomdar, the daughter of family friends on his Ashima's encouragement and decides to meet at bar where they try to recall their childhood. She shares that she has studied French Literature in France and has moved to New York just to follow her ex-fiancé, an American named Graham. They meet again a week later for lunch and go for shopping. Their relationship reaches a step further and the following weekend when she invites him to her apartment for dinner. She cooks food but it burns and while Gogol was helping her, spontaneously they get intimate and have sex. After that she reveals to Gogol that she never liked any Indian men and she fell in love with Graham. They decided to marry but when she overhears Graham that how unhappy he is with her Indian family, they had a fight and he cancels their engagement.

They get married within a year in New Jersey in presence of their families. After an overwhelming and exhausting ceremony, while opening presents in hotel room, she declares that she has decided to keep her maiden name because she has already established identity as a writer with that name. They move into an apartment and start their married life. In March, they visit Paris together. But very soon after that trip, the couple is not happy with marriage. In May, Gogol feels out of place among Moshumi's friends at a dinner party. Her friend Astrid is pregnant and when conversation turns to name of baby, Moshumi reveals to her friends that Gogol has changed his name to Nikhil. Gogol feels cheated by her. Moshumi neglects his feelings when he tried to express his feelings as she was too drunk. On their first wedding anniversary, Moshumi wears same dress which she was wearing which she has worn the night they had sex first time. Gogol does not remember that and she feels disappointed and it creates tension between them. Two days later, at university while sorting her mails, she comes across a resume of Dimitri Desjardins. She recalls that she knows him; while she was in high school they had met and dated each other but that ended when she asked him for high school prom because he was older than her. She decided to contact him. They met and started an affair on Mondays and Wednesdays after her classes. Gogol does not know about their affair.

Meanwhile, families of Gogol and Moshumi celebrate Thanksgiving at their New York apartment. Now Gogol has a vague feeling that everything is not fine in their marriage but he cannot figure out what! He decides to spend vacation together in Venice during holiday season. On Christmas of the year 2000, while preparing for the party she has organized she becomes nostalgic as this is her first Christmas after Ashoke's death and realizes that this is her last Christmas at this Pemberton Road house as she has decided to spend six months of the year in Calcutta and six months in US with families of her children and friends. Readers have been informed that Sonia and her boyfriend Ben are getting married in Calcutta and Gogol and

Moushumi have decided to get divorce. While Ashima was alone at home before party, she feels deep loneliness and misses Ashoke but she pulls herself together before children come back home.

Gogol and Sonia-Ben are going to meet at the train station. In train, Gogol recalls his last train journey from New York last Christmas, after he discovered Moushumi's affair, which she confessed while they were discussing their travel plans for next summer. She left for New York alone and when Gogol returned she had already left apartment. She informed him that she is moving back to Paris while serving him the divorce papers at his office. Gogol decided to go on vacation alone. Now, train arrives at the station they and reached home. They celebrates together in that for the last time. Party starts around 7.30 PM and Ashima's friends arrives and people starts celebrating. While he goes upstairs in his old bedroom to get his camera, he finds the the collection of short stories Ashoke' has given him on his fourteenth birthday years ago. He opens up the book for the first times and sees the line written inside the cover by Ashoke: "The man who gave you his name, from the man who gave you your name." He does not go downstairs with camera and sits there and starts reading *The Overcoat*.

The film adaptation-The Namesake:

The film directed by Mira Nair is smartly scripted. The original text is filled with lengthier narrations and incidents but to cover it up in particular time constrain, it is been scripted accordingly. Movie differs from the original text in various senses which covers the direct display of events, minor changes in the sequences of events etc.

The very beginning of the movie differ where in text it is Ashima's pregnancy which starts up the story but in movie it begins with Ashoke's event of accident. As Ashoke is bedridden, his mother looks out of the window where Durga Ma's idol was brought down; which reflects her inner prayers for her son to get well soon. Here only the character of Ashima is introduced through singing. Simultaneously, the culture of Calcutta is presented through Ashima moving on streets. When she returns home, she is asked to get ready as someone has come to see her. The whole description in the novel is when Ashima slips into flash back while taking walk before delivery and dream sequence is when Ashoke sits and waits for the delivery of Ashima. After marriage, when she shifts to Cambridge, she finds difficult to accommodate but gradually she feels comfortable with the support of Ashoke. The growing of the relation between Ashoke and Ashima is exhibited very effectively. During nights, the nightmare regarding that accident haunts him but Ashima lulls by him to sleep. This description is not in the novel.

The scene then straight way shifts to hospital where Ashima looks very uncomfortable in the short dress given and asks if they could provide longer ones. The walk before delivery is completely not referred to. While labour pain and delivery she remembers her parents. The event of Gogol's rice ceremony and five years of Gogol's growing period is eliminated. Ashima expecting Sonia is also not referred to. The scene of Ashima lifting Sonia in lap and Gogol and Ashoke walking on the rocks placed through the sea is displayed. They then shift to suburbs and arranges rice ceremony.

Rapidly, the movie turns to Gogol's class where Nikolay Gogol is discussed. The period in between is skipped. As Moushumi will turn to as a major character in the movie, the event of her visit to their place is mentioned. In between the party with friend and his first kiss etc are not displayed. In novel it is described that Ashoke gifts Gogol the book of short stories of writer Gogol on his 16th birth day but in movie it is his graduation gift. The incident afterwards

regarding Gogol showing disinterest towards Ashoke's explanation of his name follows in the same manner as in the novel.

In their visit to India, Gogol decides his field of architecture for his further studies. As they are back, his first relation is shown with Maxine as the scene opens with her birth day party. Very soon the character of Ashoke is shown dead and the exhibition of Ashima turning on all the lights of her house and Gogol shaving his head is shown effectively. After finishing rituals of his father's death, Gogol is instructed by his mother to call up Moushumi. The in between communication is not referred to at all but is shown Gogol and Ashima sitting together for a drink. The invitation for dinner is also not displayed and burning of food, ordering Chinese etc is omitted. Moushumi's complete narration of her past relation is also not discusses and scene moves to marriage. During the marriage, Ashima remembers her own marriage. In between period is again omitted and their first marriage anniversary is announced by Moushumi. The plan for vacation is not referred to and the relation of Gogol and Moushumi also reaches to an end quickly without detailed description.

When Ashima throws last party at home, Gogol not for camera but out of nostalgia visits his room and is followed by Ashima where she asks about their relation. When Gogol says that he feels free out if this relation, Ashima continues her plan to shift to India. When Gogol shows the book, Ashima speaks, " There are no accidents Gogol, Baba made you find it." Gogol reads the book when he is returning in train to his home and not in his room.

Conclusion

Every art form has an expression. The author when writes any literary book, he never thinks that it can give plot to any feature film. However, since the concept of film-adaptation has evolved, it has carried various reasons with it. The adaptation of any text is a transformation from written words to moving pictures or images. The literary written form targets only literate people of the society, whereas the film can be enjoyed by any category of people in the society. Any art form intends to spread aesthetic beauty in the society. The form may change from painting, poetry, story, sketching or film. Film and fiction as an art form are closely connected. Literary form can only appeal to the learned and literate class of the society; films are meant for common mass. Literary form of writing can reach to a particular class of the society which is very little in number. The literary work form as like others consist of didactic as well as aesthetic value, which is brought to society's large mass through film.

Art form, referred to once, twice, thrice or any number of times, changes the perception to that particular text. Every reading provides a new point of view; thus even if we call a film to be the enactment or faithful adaptation of any particular text, it is not completely true. The time and again we refer to one and the same thing; we perceive and comprehend different as well as new idea. The approach towards the thing gets innovated every time.

The literary form of art can be appreciated very well by the student of literature but will it appeal to common mass. The film maker while adapting a text keeps in mind the audience as well. He knows how to convert words into scenes which can be appreciated by viewers.

Workcited

Lahiri, Jumpa. *The Namesake*. New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2003. Print.