

When *Slumdog Millionaire* was released in 2003 the theatres ran full house for months. While thousands thronged to the theatres for the Oscar dazzle that surrounded it, a few people who had read Vikas Swarup's novel *Q&A* , published in 2005 went into the theatres for a re- creation of the novel they had enjoyed. To have a visual experience of what they had read and enjoyed, and most often they were not disappointed. Readers who have read and enjoyed the book would have been very anxious to have a visual representation of what they had read and most often the question that prevails their thoughts pertain to the film's fidelity to the book. That is the approach most commonly observed and generally researched on. This visual representation of a written text is an adaptation and film adaptations have been popular in film making industries all over the world. They have gained much acceptance with the universal viewing public too.

A common form of film adaptation is the use of a novel as the basis of a feature film, but film adaptation includes the use of the non-fiction including journalism, autobiography, comic book, scripture, plays, historical sources, and even other films. From the earliest days of cinema, in nineteenth century Europe, adaptation from such diverse resources has been a ubiquitous practice of film-making. A number of adaptations have been made in the subsequent years and they have all

been well received. To point out a fact novel adaptations have always been bagging awards and have always been popular with the viewers. Avid readers delight at the visual text, where their characters from books come to life on the big screen, while the long lines at the box office emphasize how profitable film adaptations can be for the film industry. Besides *Slumdog Millionaire* there has been quiet a long list of literary adaptations of books such as *Pride and Prejudice*, *The Lord of the Rings*, *Bridget Jones' Diary*, *Confessions of a Shopaholic* etc. More attuned to the Indian imagination we have *Devadas*, *The Blue Umbrella*, *3 Idiots* , *Two States* etc, to name a few. The success of these and other film adaptations have helped to promote new and old classics. Readers young and old are drawn to films adapted from their favourite books with great fervor, just as they are inspired to discover books they have not previously read after they have viewed the film adaptation or the film teasers. Unfortunately very often, the viewers receive these visual texts as interpretations of the written text and fail to read these visual texts as individual texts. They fail to engage in personal reader response or critique. They fail to see the adaptation as a new text unto itself.

This research does not deal with the extend of fidelity of the adaptations to the original alone but also the impact of popular film adaptations on the reading/viewing population in Kottayam. Well liked films *Slumdog Millionaire*(2008), *3 Idiots* (2009), *Life of Pi* (2012) have been focused on as they have been read by the major chunk of

the literate Kottayam population. *Slumdog Millionaire* is an adaptation of the novel published in 2005 by the Indian diplomat Vikas Swarup named *Q&A*. by Chetan Bhagat published in 2004 served the plot for the critically acclaimed *3 Idiots*. The fantasy Oscar winning movie *Life of Pi* is adapted from the novel by Yann Martel with the same name, *Life of Pi*. The reading population includes people from all walks and professions, including housewives, and greater focus would be on the student readers. Popular films of this sort help promote reading complemented by a socio-cultural awakening of the younger generation to the realities around them and their rich literary tradition.

Today's generation is surrounded by technology on all sides and is exposed to a variety of text both of the print and visual version. We often come across the growing impatience of people to the traditional written text which requires personal attention and effort, whereas there is an increased interest in visual texts which offer interaction with more than one sense. There was a time a visual text could only be viewed as a community experience as films had to be enjoyed in theatres. But today with the rising technology a film is often enjoyed in the privacy of one's home and often alone. Given these premises the responses to such film viewing is as individual as responses to reading the written text. Both reading the text and viewing the film becomes an individual and unique experience.

This research is relevant more so today as the post graduate students of English Language and Literature under the Mahatma Gandhi university have a paper that solely deals with films and film studies. Most often students are shown the film adaptations so that the students can better comprehend the written text. They also have papers that include films as part of their studies. Their paper “ Shakespeare across Cultures” includes movies that are Shakespeare adaptations. The extent to which students are able to comprehend and read the visual text without subjugating it to the written text is a debatable. Can the ill-equipped classrooms in Kerala do an intelligent reading of these film adaptations? This research intends to very briefly touch up the above mentioned issue. Hence the research focuses mostly on students and teachers, as they are most related to the issue mentioned.

This dissertation begins with an introduction to adaptation studies and its history. It will try to engage in the reading of selected adaptations and discuss on the issues of fidelity . The adaptations will be discussed through Robert Stam’s concept of “intertextual dialogism”. The research will also survey the various responses to these adaptations through random samples from Kottayam and will also explore how such literary adaptations that are incorporated into the post Graduate syllabus are taught in the classes under the MG University. The purpose of this research is to study how film adaptations of Young Adult novels are being taught in the classroom and what methods teachers are currently employing to encourage students to actively engage with the visual text as a separate interpretation of the written text. The combination of

film adaptation theory and reader response theory will provide the foundation for academic inquiry.

### **History of film adaptations**

An adaptation is the the act of adapting or the product that is the result of the process of adaptation. In film adaptation a novel or a play may be adapted onto the screen. But autobiographies, non-fiction, comics, scriptures and even other films may serve as a source for adaptation. From the earliest days of cinema, adaptation has been nearly as common as the development of original screenplays. Adaptations may certainly be seen as “an interpretation, involving at least one person’s reading of a text, choices about what elements to transfer, and decisions about how to actualize these elements in a medium of image and sound” (Desmond, Hawkes 2).

Literature inspires films for many reasons as John Desmond and Peter Hawkes point out in their book *Adaptation: Studying Film & Literature*. The reasons they state are :-

- 1) Literature exists as a great source for films because the author has already created a workable story and characters. The initial creative process being completed, it proves an easy task for a filmmaker to adapt the story, a story that has already become successful (Desmond 14).

- 2) If a film is adapted from a book it is sure to bring in a higher elite class of viewers to the local cinema. In the beginning of the Twentieth century the main viewers of popular silent movies were the lower class as it provided an escape and had no language barriers. As Desmond states in his book, “according to a survey , in 1911, 78% of the New York audience consisted of members from the working class”(Desmond15). There is no denying the fact that the cash registers ring the same even when visited by the working class or the elite class, but the owners of films and theatres would like to bring in more of the elite class , with the intention of validating films as a form of entertainment. Thus adaptations has received great popularity as the reading public who have read Shakespeare, Dickens and Hemmingway flock to the theatres to see their fictional characters and plots come to life on the big screen.
- 3) These adaptations also attract the lower classes as well, as they serve an educational purpose of educating the unread on the classics. Thus educational purpose becomes a duty , as these adaptations teach the masses of their literary heritage. As Desmond and Hawkes describes ,”In this view, film is a pedagogical medium useful for introducing literary masterpieces to contemporary audiences”(Desmond 15). For example, the lower class audience may not have read Shakespear’s *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* but on enjoying the adaptations of these plays may be inspired to visit their public library, pick a Shakespeare classic and read it. It has been proven that there has been a greater demand for the books, after the release and success of their adaptations,

in local libraries and book stores. This is indeed a way to unify all the classes as the ones who haven't read their literary classics read them and join the clan of the educated class that has read these classics years ago.

Timothy Corrigan comments that, "In the late 1920's and 1930's, adaptations of contemporary literature become more popular than ever before, partly because the introduction of sound in 1927 allows movies to more fully recreate literary and theatrical dialogue, character psychology and plot complexity found in novels" (Film and Literature 35). This enables the audience to see and hear their favorite characters come to life.

4) The monetary aspect cannot be disregarded. Filmmaking is an undeniably expensive process and adaptations help to curb expenses to a certain extent. Studios and producers have to spend upwards of a hundred million dollars on celebrity stars, effects, stunts and marketing. The release of each film is a risk. If the film becomes a box office hit the studios get back their investment with a huge profit. But if the reverse happens the invested money is lost and the studios run huge losses. Since filmmaking is a huge gamble studios look for readymade scripts in literary works which have proved themselves bestsellers in the market. These bestsellers have a guaranteed built audience that already know of the work. Audiences may identify the work because of it being a member of the literary canon such as Hemmingway, Charles Dickens, Jane Austen etc. During more recent times, audiences may be aware

of the popularity associated with a literary work such as the *Harry Potter* series and thus feel inclined to watch the film adaptation(Desmond 16).

5) Sometimes a filmmaker may have a personal commitment to a particular text that he is keen on it being viewed and appreciated by larger masses on the big screen.

Thomas Keneally's *Schindler's Ark* (1982) was adapted by Steven Spielberg in 1993 under the name *Schindler's List*. *Passion of the Christ* was the pet project of actor Mel Gibson where he turned to various religious texts to bring the last hours of Jesus Christ's life to the big screen. The chances of the success and failure of these adapted movies are a huge risk, as with Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, which was adapted by Oprah Winfrey.

One of the issues connected to film adaptations is the question of fidelity, according to Corrigan. Corrigan writes that, "Specificity assumes that different representational practices, such as literature and film, have individual material and formal structures that distinguishes and differentiate them from other practices"(31). What he means is that even while an adaptation has a literary origin it can still remain by itself and different. Vishal Bharadwarj's *Omkara* released in 2006, which is an adaptation of William Shakespear's *Othello* can be considered an example. *Omkara* shifts the Venetian plot line of *Othello* to the rural location of India thus making it a novel presentation of the Shakespearean play.



Corrigan however admits that fidelity deals with the faithfulness the films have towards the original material and he lists out five questions that deal with the fidelity of these types of films:

(1) To what extent are the details of the settings and plot accurately retained or recreated? (2) To what extent do the nuance and complexity of the characters survive the adaptation? (3) To what extent are the themes and ideas of the source communicated in the adaptation? (4) To what extent has a different historical or cultural context altered the original? (5) To what extent has the change in the material or mode of communication (a printed page, a stage, 35 mm film) changed the meaning of the work for a reader or viewer? (*Film 20*)

Corrigan uses the example of Eric von Stroheim's 1924 film *Greed* adapted from Frank Norris's 1899 novel *McTeague* to explain fidelity and the issues that surround it. He mentions that the film faithfully took every word, image, and character that appears in Norris's novel for a film that runs over nine hours long. But while left to the editor it had to undergo several edits and the film was shortened to two hours. Corrigan proves that "the collision between artistic specificity to economic and commercial restraints" ("Literature"32). The film had to be shortened due to various constraints as it would be impossible for the viewing public to sit through a film that ran nine hours. This would inevitably lead to the film being a shameful flop as it would not draw in viewers, which would mean limited screenings which in turn would

mean that the studio and theatre would not be able to cash in on multiple screenings. In the given example the director intended to stay faithful to the original source, but external forces cause the disruption as the focus shifts, sadly, from fidelity to profit making.

The limitation of fidelity studies is perhaps the most foundational element worth drawing from a survey of adaptation scholarship. Since George Bluestone's 1966 landmark attempts to problematize a strictly hierarchical, comparative, or fidelity-based approach from novel to film adaptation, the notion that a "good" adaptation is a faithful adaptation has been largely dismissed as unproductive. Bluestone writes in his book , *Novels into Films*, that what happens, when a filmist undertakes the adaptation of a novel, given the inevitable mutation, is that he does not convert the novel at all and that what he adapts is a kind of paraphrase of the novel. He says that the filmed novel, in spite of certain resemblances, would inevitably become a different artistic entity from the novel on which it is based . Yet if Bluestone's media-specific approach posits film as so different from a novel that faithfulness is impossible, this seems also to suggest that evaluative comparison is somewhat useless.

The relationship between specificity and fidelity is so complicated that it has led to a plethora theories and has been an open topic for discussion among numerous critics, philosophers and scholars. Theorists such as Dudley Andrew, Linda Costanzo Cahir, and Desmond and Hawkes, have published their own perspectives on this relationship.

When it comes to looking at films adapted from literary sources, Dudley Andrew in his 1984 study, *Concepts in Film Theory*, finds three modes in operation: borrowing, intersection, and transforming. He points out that “In the history of the arts, ‘borrowing’ is the most frequently used mode of adaptation. Here the artist employs, more or less extensively, the material, idea or form of an earlier, generally successful text”. This term is broad enough to correspond with any kind of adaptation that takes a plot or character from the literary world and brings it to the screen. The second mode, intersection, deals with how the adaptation preserves the original text so that the material remains unchanged . This kind of adaptation occurs when the artist does not change or leave out a single item from the original material. Kenneth Branagh’s *Hamlet* (1996) would be an example for this kind of adaptation. Maurice Hindle observes that this adaptation runs 242 minutes long and remains the longest Shakespearean adaptation to date because Branagh shows utmost fidelity to Shakespeare’s masterpiece keeping every character, scene, and word appearing on screen . The final mode, transforming, occurs with the adapted film reproduces perhaps one or two essential elements of the original source, such as character, setting, or story. Amy Heckerling’s *Clueless* (1995) serves as a example for transforming as it completely transforms Jane Austen’s nineteenth-century novel *Emma* into a twentieth-century high school teenage comedy.

Despite the broadness of his argument, Andrew does make interesting observations that can be useful. Andrew suggests that “the broader notion of the process of

adaptation has much in common with interpretation theory, for in a strong sense adaptation is the appropriation of a meaning from a prior text” (462). This idea might help current and future film theorists and viewers look at the theory of adaptation in a new perspective. Andrew ends his essay by suggesting “Adaptation is a peculiar form of discourse but not an unthinkable one” (469). He makes this observation because of the countless theories that have been published in the film and literature relationship.

Kamilla Elliott uses six models (psychic, international, ventriloquist, decomposing, genetic, and trumping) to describe adaptations. The most famous of these systems, however, is perhaps Geoffrey Wagner’s work that divides adaptations in three categorizations that are frequently referenced even in contemporary criticism: transposition, “in which a novel is directly given on the screen, with the minimum of apparent interference” (222); commentary, in which “an original is taken and either purposefully or inadvertently altered in some respect” (223), and analogy, which represents “a fairly considerable departure for the sake of making *another* work of art” (227). Francis Ford Coppola’s film version of *The Outsiders* might be considered transposition, for example, and PJ Hogan’s *Peter Pan* or Tim Burton’s *Alice in Wonderland* fulfill what Wagner describes as commentary. In contrast, Disney’s *Frozen*, directed by Chris Buck and Jennifer Lee, fits the idea of analogy, for the story begins from Hans Christian Anderson’s *The Snow Queen*, but departs from its details dramatically.

Such categorization and comparison systems have been widely criticized. Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan suggest that “hidden in these taxonomies are value judgments and a consequent ranking of types, normally covertly governed by a literary rather than cinematic perspective” (“Introduction” 2). Christa Albrecht-Crane and Dennis Cutchins similarly argue that adaptors cannot ever transpose a novel to the screen, but must try to interpret by re-working the precursor text and choosing the various meanings and sensations they found most compelling and that sameness was impossible and that it was the difference that made art possible. |

Many scholars focus on a comparative approach, which does not offer a clear taxonomy or categorization, but also differs from Bluestone’s belief in the impossibility of comparison, thus displacing fidelity as the chief concern. Brian McFarlane moves away from fidelity criticism by building from scholars such as Christian Metz and Roland Barthes to focus on narratives, believing that narrative is not only the chief factor novels and the films based on them have in common but is the chief transferable element. McFarlane thus explores how various narrative conventions are transposed in adapted texts, but he does not explicitly suggest what a “good” adaptation might look like.

Linda Cahir in her work *Literature into Film: Theory and Practical Approaches* also has her own set of observations when it comes to studying film adaptations, which

help to clarify Andrew's categorization. While Andrew calls them modes, she calls them translations and also distinguishes her own set of categories. First, literal translations happen when the adaptation replicates the characters, plot, and setting from the original source material. She points out that Christopher Columbus's *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (2001) and *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (2002) and Alfonso Cuarón's *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (2004) all serve as examples of literal translations as they all bring J.K.Rowling's novels to life without major alterations (41).

Cahir names the second type of adaptations traditional translations. These occur when the adaptation "[...]maintains the overall traits of the book (its plot, settings, and stylistic conventions) but revamps particular details in those particular ways that the filmmakers see as necessary and fitting" (16-17). To illustrate such an example, Cahir states that *The Graduate* (1963) serves as a traditional translation because the film's director, Mike Nichols, takes Charles Webb's novel and alters Benjamin Braddock, the protagonist, from an object of satire to a sympathetic anti-hero. Meanwhile, the film keeps the events within the novel intact (41). Cahir's traditional translation parallels Andrew's borrowing mode of adaptation

The last category, radical translations, happens when the adapted film "[...] reshapes the book in extreme and revolutionary ways both as a means of interpreting the

literature and of making the film a more fully independent work” (17). Like the previous two categories, radical translations can be found throughout the history of cinema, including Francis Ford Coppola’s film *Apocalypse Now* (1979) is a radical translation because of its altering of Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* novel. When it comes to studying these types of translations, Cahir observes both positive and negative aspects. Literal translations can excite audiences because they can bring to life the worlds that readers have seen only on the page. However, due to issues such as budget, technology, or time, these types of translations might not be able to include everything the author has created. Cahir also observes that “While traditional and radical film translations are more likely to explore the regions of meaning in the literary text than literal translations do, these two translation modes may frustrate us for their failure to render the literal world that the writer has had us so strongly envision” (42). Therefore, the film and literature relationship remains complicated because for the most part, everything that the author has created does not translate to the screen which in turn can either please or upset the audience.

Adaptations are often considered to be inferior to their literary source as it is generally presumed that literary tradition is high tradition whereas the tradition of films is more popular and caters to all classes of audience. Robert Stam, in his essay, “Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation” (2000) points out that literature has often enjoyed a privileged place in history because it not only predates film, but also

because movie narratives are often associated with popular culture rather than high culture. Consequently, discussions of film adaptations usually take a moralistic tone, evidenced in the debate about whether or not a film narrative is faithful to its novel. He writes: “The notion of fidelity gains its persuasive force from our sense that some adaptations are indeed better than others and that some adaptations fail to ‘realize’ or substantiate that which we most appreciated in the source novels”.

Arguing against such prejudices, Stam shows the impossibility of strict fidelity to any literary source because of the “automatic difference” built into the medium of film. He writes, “Each medium has its own specificity deriving from its respective materials of expression. The novel has a single material of expression, the written word, whereas the film has at least five tracks: moving photographic image, phonetic sound, music, noises, and written materials” (“Beyond Fidelity” 547). He argued that the multiple modes of expression in film can offer a “multifaceted simultaneity” that a novel cannot.

When analyzing an adaptation the theory most applied is the fidelity theory as John Desmond and Peter Hawkes argue

The main question asked about adaptations by reviews and critics alike has been to what degree the film is faithful to the text. The practitioners of this approach tend to judge a film’s merit based on whether the adaptation realizes successfully the essential narrative elements and core



meanings of the printed text. [...] How is it possible to identify the core meanings of a text when we know literary texts are capable of supporting an indefinite number of interpretations?” (Desmond, Hawkes 2)

When an adaptation is viewed we tend to analyze it by comparing it to the literary original and find that the adaptation falls short of its original. That happens because we feel that the adaptation has not addressed an element that you were interested in, in the original or we feel the adaptation has not done full justice to the original. According to Desmond and Hawke one of the many reasons why adaptations have become so popular and accepted is that it makes us aware of our literary tradition.

Film adaptations have been popular from the 1890's. Novels have always excited enthusiastic response from its audience and it was only natural for film makers to exploit that popular medium to elicit a fervent response from its viewers. Adaptations are generally made to appeal to an existing commercial audience. Novels too are a much popular medium of mass appeal. But the images created by these two entirely different mediums are worlds apart and they are inevitably received differently by the audiences. Well received and much loved by the viewing public studies have progressed much in this much researched area of film adaptations.

The audience, regardless of their complaints about this or that violation of the original, they have continued to want to see what the books 'look like'. Constantly creating their own mental images of the world of a novel and its people, they are

interested in comparing their images with those created by the film-maker. And hence we witness the audiences gobbling up one adaptation after the other and still craving for more. And there is no denying facts- Morris Beja in his book *Film and Literature* published in 1979 reports that, since the inception of the Academy Awards in 1927-8, more than threefourths of the awards for "best picture" have gone to adaptations . . . [and that] the all-time box-office successes favour novels even more.

There is the rising trend of adaptations being popular and the popularity making the book more widely read with renewed fervor. This trend has not gone unnoticed as Linda Hutcheon notes that it was not a secret that more (children's) books were borrowed and sold after an adaptation had appeared, since DVD and video sales keep the story alive.

This research will be looking into three film adaptations of bestsellers which were hugely popular with the reading and viewing public. The responses of the viewers were surveyed on the basis of a questionnaire that was distributed among the students of Mar Baselios Public School, Kottayam, St Annes Girls High School, Kottayam, and random samplings from Post graduate students, school teachers, college lecturers and other professionals all based in Kottayam. The questionnaire was not an internet based questionnaire, as most people did not have free access to the internet. The questionnaire was set keeping in mind that the school children would also be surveyed. Thus the questionnaire was kept as simple as possible. The sample

was kept small in order to keep the analysis simple and easy. There was an approximate data collection from 100 people, with students forming the major chunk. It should also be noted that maximum variation sampling was used so that a wide range of data could be collected and the problem analysed from various angles.

### **Analysis of the selected film adaptations**

The research attempts to analyse the impact that these adaptations have on the viewing reading public of the Kottayam town. Kottayam town is a relatively small town with a total area of 2,208km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 59/km<sup>2</sup> as in 2011. The history of Kottayam is deeply connected with the history of literacy and letters in Kerala. It is the centre of education with numerous schools spotting the Kottayam district maps. The people of Kottayam are very much interested in books and movies and a film adaptation of their favourite book is a dream come true for the Kottayam public.

When the Harry Porter series of books were released the pre publication booking crossed thousand in the first two days in Kottayam alone. Notwithstanding the fact that these pre-publication copies were pricier the children and adults thronged to grab their copies first. When the adaptation was released world wide the fans who had already read the books flocked in thousands to enjoy the visual pleasure of having their favourite wizards come alive on the big screen. Even today, 15 years after the

first release in the series is still very popular and still the highest grossing motion picture series in history, surpassing even the world famous James Bond series.

How adaptations are done have been dealt with in detail and why it is important is central to this enquiry. How does it impact the intellectual, aesthetic, cultural and invariably economic growth of the people (focusing primarily on Kottayam)? Does it in any respect add to the augmentation of personal vocabulary or does it offer an alternate reading of a book they have already read or does it open new vistas of interpretation to the reader/viewer? These are the questions that will be focused on in the questionnaire and a thorough analysis of the survey will be done. The survey will be done among the VII standard students of Mar Baselios Public School, Devalokam, a CBSE affiliated school that promotes reading as its favourite past time. The teaching staff of Mar Baselios Public School, BCM College and St. Anns Higher Secondary School, Kottayam, were also provided with the questionnaire.

Hundreds of film adaptations of novels and plays are churned out every year from Eastern and western film studios. These films have been carefully chosen from a world of film adaptations available. All the three films present their plot in an Indian context with Indian actors though the directors of the first film and the last film in the list were Hollywood directors.

The films chosen for this study were 1) Ang Lee's *Life of Pi* adapted from Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*

2) Rajkumar Hirani's *3 Idiots* adapted from Chetan Bhagat's *Five Point Someone*

3) Danny Boyle's *Slumdog Millionaire* adapted from Vikas Swarup's *Q&A*

The films would be discussed in the aforementioned sequence and the findings gathered from the questionnaire would be analysed. The questionnaire was distributed to twenty students from class VII of both Mar Baselios Public School and St. Ann's GHS. Twenty literarily inclined post graduate students were chosen from BCM College and Baselios College to attempt the questionnaire. Twenty teachers from Mar Baselios Public School, St. Ann's GHS, Baselios College and BCM College were also provided with the questionnaire. Forty graduate students, with an inclination for reading, from various streams were also provided with the questionnaire. Thus the data collection was done by hundred units. They were provided with the questionnaire and were expected to answer to the various questions related to films, books, film adaptations of books, film adaptations in the curriculum..etc.

### **Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* V/s Ang Lee' *Life of Pi***

The first film in this study is Ang Lee's adaptation, *Life of Pi*, of Yann Martel's novel by the same name. Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*, which won the Man Booker prize in 2002, follows the life of young Piscine Molitor Patel as he makes a journey across

the ocean with no one else but the company of an aggressive Bengal Tiger, named Richard Parker. He is the protagonist and the narrator through most of the novel. The son of a zookeeper, Pi has been around animals his entire life and it is evident that he understands them better than most. He is characterized as a boy deeply intrigued by the animals and religion. A fairly sizeable portion is dedicated to his quests to understand the various religions as he follows a more complicated religion which combines the best of Jainism, Islam and Christianity. He is easily excited about animals, zoology and religion, and he is devastated when he learns that his father has decided to migrate to Canada after selling off part of the animals in the zoo and transporting a few of them with them to Canada by sea. While at sea a storm arises and the ship sinks leaving Pi alive on a life boat. He later realizes that he is not the lone survivor, but has a hyena, a badly injured Zebra, an Orangutan named Orange juice and the very ferocious tiger named Richard Parker for company. Though devastated at the loss of his family he must battle not just the elements of nature, the fear of starvation and everything else that being stranded at sea would entail. He sustains himself on canned water initially and later self filtered water, emergency supplies and sea life. His brief stay at the fantastic Algae island, where trees grow out of the vegetation, teeming with meerkats and where as evening approaches the meerkats flee away as if in terror, leaves him with the terrific conclusion that the island eats animate things stranded on it. Occasionally we see Pi giving into his animal instincts and leaves the readers fascinated and horrified at the same time .

The novel concludes, rather confusingly for the readers, as Yann Martel leaves us with alternate version of the same story, which he narrates to the Japanese Insurance men who found it hard to believe the first version that included the tiger, the hyena, the orangutan and the zebra. He replaces the animals with a ravenous cook (hyena), a sailor (zebra) and his mother (orangutan). Thus leaving the tiger to be an projection of Pi's personality or his alter ego.

The novel is also a saga of Pi's spiritual *journey* wherein he explores various religious faiths and embraces them when fully convinced, rituals and stories all. But the undeniable aspect of the novel is it's story telling through words. Pi is able to cope with the horrifying details of his gruesome journey by inventing a version of his story with the imaginary animal characters. The vicious side of his nature that reveals itself when in the face of adversity at sea is disavowed by the creation of the tiger , Richard Parker. We sense the life line that fiction provides when Pi points out to the two Mr. Sharma's that the lion cub realizes that the human is not its mother , but it embraces the fiction because everyone needs a bit of fiction to cope with the adversities life throws at us.

In the novel, we find Pi stuck for seemingly endless days at sea in an apparently hopeless situation, Pi's daily struggle is both a physical and emotional one - laden with such intensity that the story becomes completely immersive for the reader. The detail of the battle between human and animal, between what lies within the boat and what

lies outside of it, is intoxicating and captivating. Pi's battle is with himself and watching him give in to his animal instincts is fascinating and horrifying all at the same time.

When Yaan Martel's book was published it was said that it was impossible to film it because of the complexity of emotions involved, sea as a location and the idea of filming in close proximity of a vicious tiger. But Ang Lee proves that with his unparalleled skills in direction he has been able to adapt the novel successfully and that too without changing much from the original. None of the horrors one reads in the book is forgotten as they are too horrific to be forgotten. Though the unpalatable scenes are removed the general feel of the book is kept intact and true.

But Ang Lee takes the liberty of including a love interest for Pi to probably add that extra touch of softer feelings and also to make his exit from India more painful. Pi's relationship with Richard Parker also varies in the book version and film version. In the novel Pi succeeds in almost taming the tiger by his knowledge of animals and his keen observation of animal nature. But in the film their relationship remains aggressive and yet they learn not to cross each others boundaries. The ending where he tells the first version of his adventure which includes the animals is inexplicable to the Japanese Insurance men and they demand a much palatable version. Pi seems to give the second version in an effort to get rid of the insurance men in the book story while in the film he is shown as visibly disturbed when narrating the events. Where



the ending of the book is much more ambiguous, the tone of the film seems to suggest that Pi made up the story with Richard Parker in order to cope with the horrible things that happened on his lifeboat.

By using breathtaking scenes Ang Lee manages to transport the viewers to the same emotional world as Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*, but he frees it from the bloody and violent scenes included in the book. Though he directs the film devoid of the violent scenes Lee manages to convey the central themes and philosophical thinking in the novel. The success of Ang Lee's *Life of Pi* lies in its emotional appeal that is most often lost in film adaptations.

80% of the units thought that the movie was better than the book, in lieu of the spectacular visual effects Ang Lee incorporates in to the film without leaving out the basic themes of the novel. The book contains a mixture of gory, bloodied details which may have irked the reader, but the movie is free of the violence one witnesses in the pages of the book. They all agree that it was not a exact retelling of the events in the book but they feel that the film has become an entity in itself and can stand independent from the book. 20% felt that the director should have stayed true to the novel. Sadly not one of the units were able to appraise the film as a new work and failed to appreciate the film as an original creation.

**Chetan Bhagat's *Five Point Someone* V/s Rajkumar Hirani's *3 Idiots***

The second film 3 Idiots was an adaptation of the Chetan Bhagat bestseller *Five Point Someone*. Chetan Bhagat the brilliant banker turned author is credited with having helped the new generation young Indians to read again. He has a five bestselling novels to his credit, namely *Five Point Someone*, *One Night @ the Call Centre*, *The 3 Mistakes of My Life*,” (2008) ,*Revolution 2020* and *Two States* . At least three of his bestsellers have been adapted in to films which only emphasizing the fact that his books have been extremely popular with the young of India. While his first book to film adaptation, *One Night @ a Call centre to Hello*, was a box-office flop the next film adaptation , *3 idiots* adapted from *Five Point Someone*, was a huge box office hit. With Rajkumar Hirani as the director, Vidhu Vinod Chopra as the producer and a big actors like Aamir Khan, Kareena Kapoor, Madhavan and Sharman Joshi, *3 Idiots* has created huge waves in India and abroad.

Chetan Bhagat is a former banker turned author who wrote about three friends at the Indian Institute of Technology in his book *Five Point Someone*. It talks about three friends who are unable to cope with the grilling and grueling life at IIT. They set off on a wrong foot at the IIT and realize that they would have to improvise to survive at the IIT. Their GPA is a Five Point Something out of ten which the lowest in the class and it comes back to haunt them ever so often, explaining the aptness of the title.

When the book was adapted into the Hindi film *3 Idiots* names of the characters and their attributes were changed .The narration is done by Hari Kumar-Farhan Qureshi ,

who dreams of being a wildlife photographer but is being forced by his parents to become an engineer. The film does not elaborate much on Hari's background as does the book. Ryan Oberoi- Rancho who becomes the hero in the film, assayed faultlessly by Aamir Khan, is very passionate about engineering. He advocates the philosophy that one's profession should be something he or she loves , irrespective of the pay and that it was excellence that mattered and not success. In the film Rancho also focuses the attention of the audience on the present moment and that worrying about the future would only take away a few years off one's life. Alok Gupta- Raju Rastogi , the third in the trio, is insecure and constantly relies on God. His only mission in life is to pull his family out of poverty and get his familial responsibilities fulfilled. The trio is pitted against the Director of the college who believed that life was a race and those inefficient and incompetent would and should be crushed and sidelined. He has a greater role in the film as he is the father of the heroine ,Neha Cheria-Pia Sahastrabuddhe, who happens to be the love interest of Rancho, which is a total departure from the book as Neha plays Hari's love interest. Another character , obscurely portrayed in the book and who becomes indispensable in the film, is Venkat-Chatur. Venkat is a competitive and studious South Indian college student who believes that there is no time for creativity and innovation in the turbulent and competitive race of life and he assists in bringing on a greater contrast to the carefree genius, Ryan.

While we notice that there are very similar characters and incidents from the novel in the film we cannot but feel that the novel is a very personal story about someone messing up their college life, with friends, girlfriends, parties, love, sex and everything else associated to a young adult and college. Things turn for the worse for the friends because of things they have screwed up and it does not move beyond the personal. When the film is focused we notice that the book sends a far greater message. The movie becomes unique as it seems to transcend the personal and inspires one to think about changing the very educational system in the country. That is the inspiration that one draws from the movie whereas the novel is just a diary on IIT days and does not take a strong stance on anything. It would not be difficult to think of 3 idiots as a whole new story. Geoffrey Wagner in his categorization would categorize the adaptation as an analogy where the adaptation moves considerable form the original text. This would prove true Bela Balaz's contention in *Theory of the Film* that adaptations are distinctive works of art. He also claims that inspite of being a new work of art it bears some obligation to the kernel of truth , similar to Eisenstein's "initial general image", ie. to say that one general truth is conveyed by the written piece of literature. Balaz's in his book says,

A film scriptwriter adapting the play may use the existing work of art merely as raw material, regard it from the specific angle of his own art form as it were raw reality, and pay no attention to the form once already given to the material.  
(Balaz 263)

Balaz's statement goes on to prove that this movie draws inspiration for the movie but moves to being a totally new story all together. The film is about education, is education in itself and is not just a personal account of how one deal with college life and its peripheries.

The survey results for this particular movie were rather confusing and it was only at a deeper personal analysis that the true nature of this confusion could be fathomed. 62% agreed that the adaptation was a commentary the original book , but almost 40% agreed that it was a transposition of the original text. The confusion arose from the fact that there were a fairly good number of people who believed that the work was a transposition and analogy at a point of time. The film was to be true to the fact was entirely different from the book except for the fact that it was a campus plot and it added more depth and meaning to the film than the book which was just a log book of what not to do in an IIT campus. The film rendered a greater meaning to the Chetan Bhagat plot and it gave a greater message on our deteriorating educational system.

### **Vikas Swarup's Q&A V/s Danny Boyle Slumdog Millionaire**

The last film in the selected trilogy is Slumdog Millionaire that has to it credit a number of Oscars and a British director, Danny Boyle. Slumdog Millionaire is adapted from the book by Vikas Swarup originally titled Q&A, but later renamed *Slumdog Millionaire* after the huge Oscar fame that the film enjoyed. According to Vikas Swarup himself the basic idea behind the book was to show that the education

and wealth were no bar for ingenuity and that knowledge does not belong to the wealthy and the formally educated. Swarup claims that his book was essentially about finding one's own pot of gold. The novel deals with the life of Ram Mohammad Thomas, a slum orphan, and the people his life touches. The novel unfolds as Ram wins one billion rupees on television quiz show named "Who will win a Billion?". He is arrested and tortured by the police under the suspicion of cheating as it is hard to accept the fact that a poor, uneducated, orphaned tiffin boy could answer the questions on the show. Ram claims that his bizarre life experience in the underbelly of metros like Mumbai, Delhi and Agra and through various orphanages and brothels taught him the answers to the questions on the game show. Vikas Swarup weaves an intriguing narrative with complex characters that pull at your heart strings, as they struggle, love, hate, fight, care in their effort to survive.

Ram Mohammed Thomas was abandoned by his mother while an infant and he was taken in by the church, but later moves on to darker circumstances, sees things no child should see, as he takes to living in slums and brothels, becomes streetwise but still emerges as a boy with a good heart, a loyal friend and a faithful lover. He meets a lot of people, both good and bad, as he travels across India, who become the characters that mould the novel and Ram's life.

The movie is significantly different in that Danny Boyle, the director of the film adaptation, shifts the focus from the complex characters Ram meets in his life to the

love story. The film is about Jamal, with Boyle doing away with his multi faceted name, Ram Mohammad Thomas. Jamal Malik is on the verge of winning a game show, *Who Wants to be a Millionaire* when, like Ram, he is accused of cheating and is arrested and tortured by the police , when he had only one question to answer and will the one billion rupees.

In the film Jamal lives with his older brother and mother in the slums of Mumbai, until their mother is murdered by Hindu rioters. The boys manage to escape with their neighbor, Latika, and take to living on the streets and surviving as best as they can. Later the brothers are separated from Latika but she remains the love interest for Jamal and is perpetually on the lookout for her. As the boys grow older their relationship with each other becomes strained and they take to moving in opposite directions. Salim takes to working for an underworld don, Jamal holds on to the last vestiges of innocence in him and leads a life of honesty. But the bond between the brothers remain strong till the end. They remain connected and it is through Salim's ultimate sacrifice that Jamal wins his love.

The film is not a word to word adaptation of the book and one comes across major digressions from the book. The most conspicuous difference is the change of the multi religious name of the central character Ram Mohammed Thomas to Jamal Malik making him instantly a member of the minority community alone. To someone who expects to find the exact contents of the book in the movie this will be a very poor

adaptation. But the director and scriptwriter does justice to the book by sticking to the theme of poverty in the slums, the life in the brothels and lack of basic rights and plot, in addition to the love angle that the film tends to foreground.

The novel fails to take on a linear chronological narration, with each chapter structured around each question asked at the quiz show. But in the film with each question there is a flashback to Jamal's childhood, giving it some sense of order. The film seemed more darker as visual images of how men treat fellow human beings is an eye opener to the gruesome realities of the metropolitan underbelly. The romance in the book is merely an aspect of Ram's life, whereas the romance becomes the centre of the film and the audiences leave the theatre with the accomplished feeling of fulfilled love. Forgotten are the grisly realities that makes Jamal the Jamal we see at the railway station in the end. The film is ultimately described as a well composed love poem, but the novel is grittier. Even though darker aspects are portrayed in the book it is definitely more poignant. It is what one can refer as a loosely adapted work. When asked how Beaufoy was able to decide what he wanted to keep and what he decided to leave out while adapting Vikas Swarup's Q&A he replied:

Well, the book, Q&A by Vikas Swarup, has this initial concept of the "Slumdog" who gets on the game show Who Wants to Be a Millionaire? But it's effectively a series of short stories that don't link up a lot. So, I had to go to Bombay and rediscover a whole life story for this character, really. I invented Latika—invented a lover for him that he loses, and loses again. I had to build a



whole new world for the characters while keeping this very seductive core of it —that you've got this guy on a game show, and the money is doubling each time, and he keeps getting more into it. So, I kept that from the book, but pretty much reinvented everything around it. (Reelzchannel Interview)

Even as Boyle acknowledges Swarup's text, he disavows it, claiming that the adapter must not feel duty-bound to the original or its author:

Indebted, of course, to Vikas for the original idea but unfettered by any obligation other than to the life of the characters and the maximum city they live in, this is bold, vibrant writing that knows where it's going and makes everything work toward getting there

It is worth noting that the book sales of *Q & A*, which has been renamed *Slumdog Millionaire* by publishers, have jumped significantly since the film began to win awards. This appears to be a case where the film has generated an interest in a novel that international readers may have otherwise overlooked.

*Slumdog Millionaire* even though the film deviated extensively, was well received as the film added greater flesh to the book and the characters were etched deeper in the psyche of the people. Unlike Ang Lee's *Life of Pi*, which removed all the unpleasant details of the book so as not to shock the viewer, Boyle's *Slumdog Millionaire* retained the gruesome scenes of the text, thus leaving it as a documentary of the poverty and hardships of a third world country.

On the analysis of the data collected from the questionnaire it was found that 48% agreed that the book, Q&A, was an analogy of the original work. Boyle manages to deviate considerably from the story line and yet make the viewers who have read the book earlier on feel contented and satisfied at how their favourite book has gone through transition to a greater unique work. But more than 90% agreed that the analogy of the Q&A was warranted as it only left the characters on a higher pedestal and left the viewers who had already read the text on greater heights of ecstasy. Less than 5% felt that the director had to follow the lines of the text leaving no creativity to the director.

## **Conclusion A Consolidate Of All The Data Collected Through The Questionnaire**

Adaptations are done for a variety of reasons like bringing a literary text to a wider audience or to draw monetarily on its cultural respectabilty and popularity or sometimes to develop another reading of the original text. When we consider the three movies focused in this study we realize that the three movies have been centrally focused on the original books.

All students these days are so exposed to electronic media that is has become indispensable in their lives. When extensively surveyed through the questionnaire the following beliefs and tendencies were also revealed:-

- a) 96% of the students and teachers believed that adaptations and films in general helped to broaden their understanding of the world and other cultures.
- b) It was also found that samples below the age of 18years preferred the adaptations to the actual literary texts where as the units above 18yrs found the books more creative and intellectually challenging.
- c) Though a major proportion of units agreed that film and adaptations got them to read and enjoy classics and books more. But the units below 18yrs were reluctant to read the books once they have seen the adaptation. But they agreed strongly that the film adaptations could be used as teaching tools.
- d) 68% agreed that the students should be trained to view the adaptations as singular unique works and not as an appendage to the original literary text. The rest claimed that the adaptation should always be read in the light of the original text.
- e) 70% agreed that the teachers should be given more training in how to deal with syllabus prescribed adaptations and thereby helping the students to understand the adapted work as an entirely new work all together.
- f) 80% agreed that watching the film adaptations first got them interested in reading books in general and made books more interesting.
- g) 52% agreed that films and books contributed to their vocabulary. But most of the 52% belonged to the category of grownups while the units below the age of 18yrs refrained from reading books too much and

they acquired most ,if not all, of their vocabulary from films or TV.

But adaptations at least piqued their interest enough to read the

original texts.

- h) 78% agreed that it helped develop wider creative skills and open up vistas of new perspective.
- i) 89% strongly agreed that films combined several art forms and offers varied opportunities in story narrations.
- j) 88% agreed that films should be made a part of the curriculum and that the teachers should be trained to handle films in the classroom.
- k) 79% who read the book made it a point to go see the film adaptation to check if the movie was as good as the book they enjoyed.
- l) 57% consented to the fact that they picked the book to read after they saw the movie and was impressed with the story line.
- m) 56% claimed that after being influenced by the adaptations and films in general they decided to pursue a career in film making, direction or acting.

It can be decided from these findings that the sampling was divided on the basis of their age. The age groups that formed were the below 18yrs category and the above 18 yrs category. Most of the younger age group preferred to watch the adaptations and not really bother to read the literary text. But the adaptations intrigued at least some of the students from the younger category to read the original texts. The older age group was more used to reading and the adaptations merely pointed them to new materials for reading. And it is a proven fact that people who read avidly had a much richer vocabulary than those who did not. The adaptations also aroused the creative

capabilities of the receivers of both the text and film adaptation. It was conclusive from the findings that adaptations were important and could not be discarded as insignificant in the lives of students not just in Kottayam but also all around the world. The adaptations not only provide them with an imaginative visual perspective of an original work, it offers a chance for them to augment their vocabulary and academic vistas. It has also been noted that the current method by which films in the syllabus were taught was inadequate and limited the intellectual faculties of the students to very narrow objectives and angles.

Adaptations cannot be done away with as adaptations add to the body of interpretation, criticism and analysis of the existing text. It also prompts a renewed interest in the book original itself as can be seen in the survey. The sales of the book itself increases and a new edition is printed after the release of a film adaptation. For eg: Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *Ice Candy Man* (1991) was adapted into a movie by Deepa Mehta, *1947:Earth* (1997), which was quite popular with the public. The favourable response prompted the reprint and new edition of the same book under a new title, *1947:A Fractured Nation*. The reverse is also often seen these days. After the release of the Deepa Mehta film *Water*(2005) the film was 'novelized' and published as a book by the same name, written by Bapsi Sidhwa. It was published in 2006 in the wake of the huge controversy that followed the release of the film thus cashing in on

the publicity. Nowadays novels are envisioned in such a manner with a film adaptation as its outcome.

When we study a text and its adaptation intertextual connections exist, based on ideological similarities and differences, point of view, female gaze etc..Such discussions should search for meaning rather than simply check if the adaptation was faithful to the original source. This would warrant that the best way to approach adaptation studies is by studying intertextuality. As Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan state, “a multiplicity of sources [should not be] bemoaned but celebrated” (28). But this inclination to check if an adaptation stays exact to the source book is actually deviating brings about a shift in focus from the film to the book, thus making the adaptation only a dependent of the book and not as a creative entity in itself.

The English classrooms today should be equipped to deal with adaptations as separate entities and the teachers should be better trained to deal with the queries of the students and to direct the thought process of the students away from the checklist that checks the exactness of the adaptation to the text.

The viewing public of Kottayam are more or less an avid reading public too as the study would warrant. As they are well read they are able to accept the adaptations with greater alacrity and are willing to give the adaptations and allowance of change, if the change is a better one. But they are still not equipped to see the text as a new and different work of art. This is because though most of Kottayam belong to the literate

category, film studies are a relative new entry into the educational stream. The present syllabus of the English Post Graduate students includes adaptations of famous literary works and they are taught basically as only adaptations. This will not help the idea of viewing these adaptations as independent works of literature. For this to be taken up seriously change should happen at the grass root level and the teachers handling these class have to be trained especially to this effect. And if this is done then adaptations will cease to be an extension of the original work and will be seen as independent work with its inspiration in the original work.

## Questionnaire

Name.....

Age.....

Answer the questions after reading them carefully by choosing the options given along with the questions.

- 1) Are you interested in movies?  
Yes/No
- 2) Are you interested in reading books?  
Yes/No
- 3) List out any three kinds of books you like to read?
  - a)
  - b)
  - c)
- 4) Are you familiar with the concept of adaptations?  
Yes/No
- 5) Name a few film adaptations you have seen and enjoyed?
  - a)
  - b)
  - c)
  - d)
  - e)
- 6) Did you read the original text from which the film was adapted?  
Yes/No
- 7) Did you read the text before or after you saw the film?  
Before/After/Didn't read
- 8) Do you prefer the literary text or the film adaptation?  
Literary text/ Adaptation/Don't care
- 9) Have you been able to develop your vocabulary by reading?  
Yes/Rarely/Sometimes/No
- 10) Do you agree with about including film adaptations as part of the curriculum?



Agree/Disagree

11) Have you considered a profession in the media field after being exposed to film

adaptations in your curriculum?

Yes/No/Sometimes

12) Do you think that adaptations prompt you to read the original texts at

least in a small way?

Yes/No/Don't care

13) Do you think that adaptations should be totally avoided because it does

not stay true to the original text?

Yes/No

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