



## ADAPTATION AS INTERPRETATION: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES IN INDIAN NOVELS AND THEIR CINEMATIC ADAPTATIONS

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### Abstract

*The adaptation of literary texts into cinema entails intricate narrative modifications influenced by cultural, artistic, and medium-specific limitations. This research analyzes the relationship between Indian novels and their film adaptations, concentrating on the variations in narrative strategies across different media. This study examines how filmmakers reinterpret source material through visual storytelling, structural modifications, and thematic emphases, using key examples such as *The Guide* (R.K. Narayan and Vijay Anand), *Devdas* (Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay and various adaptations), and *The White Tiger* (Aravind Adiga and Ramin Bahrani). The study contends that adaptation transcends mere translation, functioning as an interpretive act that embodies modern socio-cultural conditions and the director's artistic vision.*

### Keywords

*Indian novels, Film adaptations, Narrative strategies, Visual storytelling, Literary adaptation, Cultural reinterpretation, Medium-specific transformation, Socio-cultural context, Director's vision, etc.*

### Full Article

#### **Introduction**

Adaptation studies have long discussed the authenticity of film versions to their literary sources, frequently framing the subject in terms of "faithfulness." More recent research (Hutcheon, 2006; Stam, 2005) says that adaptations should be seen as separate artistic works instead of lesser copies. In India, where literature and movies have strong cultural ties, adaptations can function as new interpretations that reflect changing ideals in society.

This article looks at how film adaptations of Indian literature change narrative methods like point of view, time structure, character development, and symbolism. The study underscores the creative decisions filmmakers undertake and their impact on audience reception through a comparative analysis of significant literary and cinematic examples.

#### **Theoretical Framework: Adaptation as Interpretation:**

Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006) says that adaptations are "repetition without replication," which means that they are creative reinterpretations. Robert Stam (2005) also criticizes "fidelity discourse," saying that movies should be looked at as separate works. This paper analyzes Indian adaptations as dialogues between literature and film, wherein alterations in narrative approaches signify medium-specific storytelling requirements.

#### **Case Studies: Changes in the Story in Indian Adaptations:**

**1. *The Guide* (a novel by R.K. Narayan from 1958 and a movie by Vijay Anand from 1965)**



Narayan's book is told from a third-person limited point of view, which lets us see Raju's moral complexity and psychological depth. The movie version, on the other hand, employs flashbacks, songs, and visual symbols to show Raju's inner struggle. Some important modifications are:

### **Structural Changes:**

The movie's non-linear structure replaces the novel's linear one, which makes the drama more intense.

### **Visual Storytelling:**

The film uses mise-en-scène (for example, Raju's change from tourist guide to spiritual teacher) to show themes of redemption.

### **Musical Narration:**

Songs like "Piya Tose Naina Lage Re" add emotional depth, which is not there in the book.

This case shows how film approaches can change the focus of a story while also making its themes stronger.

## **2. Devdas (1917 Novel by Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay / Multiple Film Adaptations):**

There have been many adaptations of Devdas, the most famous of which being Bimal Roy's in 1955 and Sanjay Leela Bhansali's in 2002. Each one shows the style and ideas of its time. Some important things to compare are:

### **Interpretations of Characters:**

#### **Bimal Roy's Version (1955):**

Stays closely to the novel's tragic realism and uses black-and-white cinematography to make sad scenes stand out.

#### **Bhansali's Version (2002):**

Uses lavish visuals and more dramatization to turn Devdas into a spectacular show. Bhansali's rendition replaces the novel's introspective text with dramatic speech and too many visuals.

### **Gender Perspectives:**

The story focuses on Devdas' self-destruction, while Bhansali's movie gives Paro and Chandramukhi greater power, which is in line with modern feminist readings. These adaptations show how directors change the basic material to fit modern tastes and what audiences want.

## **3. The White Tiger (2008 novel by Aravind Adiga; 2021 film by Ramin Bahrani):**

Adiga's book is written in the first person, with Balram Halwai telling the story of how he went from being poor to starting his own business. This is how the movie changes the story:

### **Voiceover vs. Visual Narration:**

The book's letters are substituted by direct voiceovers in the movie, which uses stronger visual contrasts (for example, the difference between Delhi's wealth and Laxmangarh's poverty).

### **Pacing & Condensation:**

The movie cuts out some of the subplots (such as Balram's family's oppression) to make it shorter, which changes the complexity of the themes.

The movie's visual satire (such as the "rooster coop" metaphor) is more obvious than the book's dark comedy.



This case shows how hard it is to turn a novel's complex first-person narration into a visual medium.

### **Comparative Analysis: Narrative Techniques across Different Mediums:**

#### **A. Point of View and Subjectivity:**

A lot of novels have interior monologues, like the first-person narration in *The White Tiger*.

To show how people feel, movies use voiceovers, close-ups, and subjective camera angles.

#### **B. Structure of Time:**

Literary flashbacks are more descriptive, but cinematic flashbacks involve editing, like the broken-up timeline in *The Guide*. Movies typically cut off subplots to speed up the story (for example, *The White Tiger* doesn't include any minor characters).

#### **C. Symbols and Themes:**

Novels incorporate symbols in the text, like the repeating theme of unfulfilled love in *Devdas*. Movies turn these into visual themes, like Bhansali's usage of mirrors and palanquins.

#### **D. Describing and Acting:**

Narration shapes literary characters, whereas actors construct film characters (like Shah Rukh Khan's *Devdas* and Dilip Kumar's *Devdas*).

### **Conclusion:**

#### **Adaptation as Cultural Reinterpretation:**

This study shows that Indian novels turned into movies are not just translations; they are new versions that are molded by the director's vision, the limitations of the medium, and the culture in which they are made. Novels explore psychological and philosophical complexities, whereas films emphasize visual and emotional immediacy. The interaction of these narrative methods shows that adaptation is an interpretive endeavor that adds to both text and film. Future research may investigate regional Indian adaptations, such as Malayalam or Bengali movies, to further comprehension of how linguistic and cultural subtleties affect narrative transposition.

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