



**“ADAPTATION AS INTERSEMIOTIC
TRANSLATION: A STUDY ON Dr.
CHANDRAPRAKASH DWIVEDI’S FILM
“PINJAR”, AN ADAPTATION OF AMRITA
PRITAM’S NOVEL “PINJAR”**

**Mrs. PUPUL MOHANTY
LECTURER IN ENGLISH
UGS MAHAVIDYALAYA
SAKHIGOPAL, DIST- PURI
STATE- ODISHA**

ABSTRACT

Translation is not only about words if we define translation following the definition of Roman Jakobson. He was perhaps the first to define translation outside its traditional domain. And that famous threefold division of translation amuses me to put my favorite art form of cinema for analysis, into the third and the most complex form of translation propounded by Roman Jakobson in his 1959 essay on *Linguistic Aspects of Translation*. This famous Russian linguist and literary theorist Roman Jakobson defines that translation can take place between distinct languages (inter-

lingual translation), within the same language (intra-lingual translation) and even between two systems (inter-semiotic translation). The third category i.e. intersemiotic translation or transmutation, is the most complicated and therefore the most interesting type of translation which means interpretation of the signs of a sign system with the signs of another sign system. It deals with two or more completely different semiotic codes, e.g., linguistic one *versus* a musical and/or dancing, and/or image ones. In this regard the case of most Indian classical dance and music forms can be cited as effective examples. These are borrowed (intersemiotic translation) from epics and Puranas (linguistic codes) of ancient India. Popular local “Jatras”, “Ram Lilas” also draw stories from Sri Ramacharitamanasa, The Mahabharata and The Ramayana. However, the most obvious example of inter-semiotic translation is that, from the print media to the celluloid i.e., from the novel, short story and play to the cinemas. Adaptation of a literary text is essentially an interpretation of the original text using a different medium. It is fundamentally a translation of a narrative from one medium to another. Thus, adaptation of literary texts to the celluloid media, generally taken as a branch of film studies can now be examined within the context of translation. The theme of fiction into film is largely a question of adaptation and moves beyond the traditional domain of translation studies that primarily focused either on authenticity related questions or fidelity to the original. The notion of interpretation brings in a new dimension to the existing debates within the domain. And the central issue that is to be examined then is the notion of translation as transcreation and thereby interpretation. It is, in fact challenges the longstanding notion of the translation as inferior to the original (source text). This paper deals with certain theoretical questions in relation to Dr. Chandraprakash Dwivedi’s film “Pinjar” based on Amrita Pritam’s novel “Pinjar”. This study attempts to answer how film making is a process of translation and transmutation from the source text, what the film gains and losses

during adaptation, how far fidelity to the original is necessary and why sometimes the filmmaker knowingly alters the source to fit into a new cultural context, how filmic mise-en-scene analysis brings out important aspects of a film.

(Keywords: *Pinjar, Intersemiotic Translation, Transmutation, Semiotics, Adaptation, Fidelity*),

AMRITA PRITAM, THE POET AND THE NOVELIST:

Amrita Pritam became the first Punjabi woman writer to move out of the shadows of the contemporary male writers and created her own niche in Punjabi literature. She was not just a writer but revolution personified, whose works as well as life were a bold statement that redefined not just the Punjabi literary canon but also found new words and images for how Indian women perceived themselves. As a novelist, her most noted work was *Pinjar* (The Skeleton) (1950), in which she addressed the helplessness faced by the women of her time through her memorable character, Puro and depicted the loss of humanity and ultimate surrender to existential fate. Her experiences during the partition inspired her to write the novel 'Pinjar'. The novel was made into an award-winning film in 2003. This work established her as a voice for the women who suffered immeasurable hardships during the partition. In the 1960s, post-*Pinjar*, the feminist streak in her writings became more predominant and vociferous.

PINJAR: THE NOVEL

Pinjar (translates to skeleton) is a Punjabi novel written by Amrita Pritam. It was first published in 1950 and then reprinted in 2009 (after Amrita's death) by Tara Press. It has also been translated into English by the celebrated author Khushwant Singh and in French by Denis Matringe. It was made into a movie of the same name which won the National Award in India.

Pinjar is set in the time immediately preceding and leading up to the India-Pakistan partition. A Muslim youth Rashid abducts a young Hindu girl Puro prior to her wedding, as an act of revenge. On her return, she is rejected by her family since she is now considered impure. She marries Rashid and moves to what would later become Pakistan. Soon after, a new name, "Hamida" is tattooed on her arm, and she is married to Rashid. Puro is wiped off her parents' memories, her past erased. How she reconciles herself to her circumstances and makes her home amid the madness of the partition, forms the backbone of the book.

The story is told from Puro's perspective, and is a unique look into the harrowing situation of women at the time. It brings out the multitude of misfortunes that could strike a girl for no fault of hers. She is objectified as the vessel of family honour, a vessel that had to be thrown away if it broke. The title *Pinjar* (which means a skeleton) is connected with the idea of devaluing women and reducing them to mere objects of men's pleasure. *Pinjar* portrays the agony of communal

riots, abduction, trauma and symbolic reunion of victims and victimizers in the prophetic hope of communal amity. Pinjar is a huge outcry hidden behind the silent sobs of thousands of females like Puro.

PINJAR: THE FILM

The film Pinjar, released on 24 October 2003, was produced by Lucky Star Entertainment and distributed by Fox Star Studios and directed by Chandraprakash Dwivedi takes a unique stance by deftly unveiling the tragic lives of women who were mistreated by men from both the communities. With Dr. Chandraprakash Dwivedi's apt screenplay the film is indeed a cinematic treat supported by a mournful soundtrack by Uttam Singh and lyrics by Gulzar and Amrita Pritam. Art direction is by Muneesh Sappel. The female protagonist Puro is played by Urmilla Matondkar while Manoj Bajpai enacted the role of Rashid, the male protagonist. Sanjay Suri as Ramchand, Sandali Sinha as Lajjo, Priyanshu Chatterjee as Trilok, Isha Koppikar as Rajjo, Lilette Dubey as Puro's mother and Kulbhushan Kharbanda as Puro's father Farida Jalal and Alok Nath as Ramchand's parents, Sima Biswas as Pagli or the mad woman and Dina Pathak as Rahim's aunt have justified their roles.

The film starts with Puro (Urmilla Matondkar) and her family at Amritsar. Puro's family includes her father (Kulbhushan Kharbanda), her pregnant mother (Lilette Dubey), her brother Trilok (Priyanshu Chatterjee), her younger sister Rajjo (Isha Koppikar) and a kid sister.

They are shifting to Chhatowani, their village on Indo-Pak border in Punjab. Her marriage is fixed to a young cultured educated man Ramchand (Sanjay Suri) of Rattowal in Punjab of undivided India. The time period is 1946. Puro's brother is a freedom fighter. Puro and her family's joy get shattered when Rashid (Manoj Bajpai) a Muslim of the same village kidnaps her. There had been an ancestral dispute between their families. Abduction of Puro was to settle the past dispute.

When Puro escapes from Rashid's captivity and goes to her parents, they do not accept her considering her as impure, defiled after her stay with her abductor. Her family dismisses her even if she was untouched by Rashid. Left with no other option, Puro marries Rashid. Her dislocation gives her a new name, 'Hamida'. On the other end, Trilok is married to Ramchand's sister Laajo (Sandali Sinha) and Rajjo is married to Ramchand's cousin brother (however in the novel Rajjo is married to Rammchand). Rashid leaves the village with Hamida and the two settle in the nearby village Sakkar. Puro, greatly depressed by all the happenings conceives but had a miscarriage (this episode of Puro's life is actually a deviation from the novel where she never had a miscarriage but instead gives birth to a son, Javed)

She thereafter starts bringing up the child of a mad woman (Seema Biswas) who had died during the delivery of the child. But very soon, the child is taken away by the Hindus of their village.

In 1947, the British leave India splitting the country into two. The effects of Partition were equal to people on the either side. Rattoval and Sakkar become part of Pakistan. Rajjo has gone to Amritsar with her brother. But Laajo, Ramchand and their parents are caught in clutches of riots. At Rattoval, Muslims set fire to all the houses belonging to the Hindus. A mob runs behind Ramchand with open swords. Ramchand manages to escape and leaves the house with his mother and sister Laajo. There is no news of his father. During migration to India, Laajo is abducted by a Muslim. Ramchand and his mother are left lamenting the loss of first Ramchand's father and then Laajo.

Puro meets Ramchand who pleads to save his sister. Puro, with Rashid's help, successfully helps Laajo to escape from her abductor. They bring Laajo to Trilok and Ramchand at the border.

Trilok and Puro's meeting are full of tears. Trilok asks Puro to return and marry Ramchand. But her characterization takes an unexpected turn towards the end when she reunites with her family but decides to stay with her husband. She surprises them by saying that she now belongs to Pakistan. Rashid has already left the place. Puro runs around searching for him. She finds him and says that now he is her only truth. The film captures this scene so realistically. They bid farewell to Laajo, Ramchand and Trilok.

COMPARISON BETWEEN THE NOVEL AND THE FILM

Unlike the novel Pinjar's flashback and flashforward style of movement, the film Pinjar moves ahead with linear time. The novel begins with present time, goes flashback, comes back to present time again. It starts with pregnant Puro at Sakkar recollecting her happy past and lamenting her present. The film Pinjar starts with the 'past' of the novel as its present. Puro is seen enjoying her youth at Amritsar with her family at the out-set of the film. Unlike the novel neither she nor her brother are teenagers. Both are matured enough to understand and enjoy their lives. Puro's brother appears as Trilok (Priyanshu Chatterjee) in Dwivedi's film is also a Congress activist.

Chandraprakash Dwivedi has filled the first forty-five minutes of the film with bright colours and bright light. Be it the costume, the setting, music, songs, dance everything is bright depicting joy and happiness. The songs and settings of Punjabi houses reflect the joviality of Pre-Partition Punjabi families.

The middle part of the film shows how Ramchand of the novel played by Sanjay Suri denies the marriage proposal to Rajjo (Isha Kopikaar), Puro's younger sister (a departure from the novel where Ramchand actually marries Puro's sister Rajjo) He believes that it will spoil Rajjo's life. She will not be able to see a husband in him, but would be reminded of her sister's tragedy every time she sees him. He suggests to get his young cousin marry Rajjo instead and save the family prestige. Even Trilok (Priyanshu Chatterjee) is shown as young enough to file a complaint of Puro's abduction. Trilok of the novel is a little boy unable to take such bold decisions as in the

film. Ramchand, Trilok and Laajo are brought to the 21st Century audience in a convincing manner. They are mature enough to take decisions and assert their points of view.

Then the film has a mixed atmosphere of being joyous and dull at the same time. At Amristsar and Rattoval the two families are shown living a joyful life, enjoying the fair of 'Baisakhi'. At Sakkar, Hamida alias Puro passed through the pain of a miscarriage. Both Laajo and Puro alias Hamida's names are tattooed on their hands. Laajo's pain has joy hidden and Puro's pain has the sorrow of the loss of identify. And parallel to this, it also tells of how one has to pass through the problems, the trauma, away from the dreamt life, and still has to exist.

The novel shows the sufferings of women from pre-partition period in 1936 followed by abductions of females during Partition of the sub-continent. The film Pinjar shows the same but on the eve of Partition. Puro's suffering on the screen starts in 1946 and extends upto 1947 where the film ends. Dwivedi does not lengthen Puro's suffering for eleven long years. There is omission of the characters of Kammo or Tara in the film. The mad woman (Seema Biswas) the Hindu female refugee whom Puro helps to reach the Hindu camp and Laajo are the only sufferers shown on the screen.

The last part of the film depicts the reality of Partition period through swords, stabbings, killings, bloodsheds, kids butchered, buses set on fire, girls kidnapped from the groups of refugees migrating to the other side of the border, house locked from outside and set on fire with people screaming, shouting being burnt alive and much more.

The film portrays Hindus and Muslims in the same light without demonizing or glorifying either of the two. Contrary to the stereotypical depiction of Muslim characters, here we see a guilt-ridden abductor who unwillingly kidnaps Puro only for his family's sake. His guilt is reflected in his teary-eyed confession to Puro, asking her to forgive him for his wrongdoing. The restlessness on his face suggests how a family feud that has been extended to coming generations traumatizes the supposed victim as well as the perpetrator. Rashid is as distressed as Puro for not being able to assert his disapproval to the act of abduction. Subsequently, he stands for Puro's decisions and even makes sure that she returns to her family.

The Hindu community is also depicted in multiple shades. Puro's father and the Panchayat are irrevocable social patriarchs who refuse to give value to women and always prioritize their vanity. Though indifferent to the father who abandoned his own daughter, the Panchayat instead condemns Rashid for bringing up the 'mad' woman's child who was a Hindu. Rashid unabashedly responds to their hypocritical stance by saying that the child was never paid attention to when he was lying unattended but the Panchayat decided to look into it only after six long months. This scene aptly unravels the inherent hypocrisy within the Hindu community in the story.

When a film-maker makes a 'period film', he has to be very careful about everything related to that specific period. He needs to be faithful to the time, structure, architecture, language,

costumes, traditions and thinking pattern of the society of that specific period. The film Pinjar has used villages of **Rajasthan** and sets of **Amritsar** and **Lahore at Film City, Mumbai** to create the period of 1940s, pre-partition and Partition era. The settings brought Film-Fare best Art Director's award to Muneesh Sapal, the Art Director of the film.

Costumes are used as symbols too. The first quarter of the film is full of bright and shining colours. Even the costumes are of floral and natural colours. It suggests joy, happiness and easy life. It also hints to hopes for a bright future. The last quarter has more of dull, dusty earth-coloured costumes. It suggests the trauma of Partition shattering once colourful Punjab. Puro's two stages of life is conveyed by her costume too. While happy as Puro, she is seen with red, pink and orange dupatta on floral colour dresses, while distressed as Hamida she wears white, black or brown dupatta on white, black or brown colour dresses. While moving from Chhatovani to Sakkar after her marriage with Rashid, Puro sits in the bus wearing a 'burkha'. The '**burkha**' becomes a metaphor of Hamida concealing Puro's identity then onwards.

Chandraprakash Dwivedi has employed the technique of **dream** to bring his Puro very near to the writer's Puro. She dreamt of her parents, family, friends and also Ramchand. She daydreams herself as a bride in palanquin led by Ramchand that implies, she still loves Ramchand.

The music and the songs of Pinjar help to build up the mood or add to the importance of the characters. The song **Mar udaani...mat mar udaani...** become the words for Puro and her family living happily at Amritsar and eagerly preparing for her marriage. Similarly, **Shabani Shabba...** explains the festival of Baisakhi celebrated at Punjab. **Sitako dekhe sara gaon...** is sung by Ramchand and his sister Laajo on screen. This song talks much about Ramchand, Laajo and their family. It suggests that Ramchand's family was rich, educated and cultured. This song builds a positive image of Ramchand revealing his peace loving and God-fearing nature; his love for music and his faith in religion. The song is about Lord Ram and his wife Sita's parting and her 'agnipariksha'. It gives a hint to the next event. **Of all the songs, Chandraprakash Dwivedi has taken two from Amrita Pritam's collection, namely, "waris shah nu..." and "charkha chalati maa...dhaga banati maa..."** Both these songs sing of the bitter truth of the society: injustice and suppression of women making her existence merely a 'skeleton'. "Waris Shah nu..." is a poem written by Amrita Pritam invoking the 18th century poet, '**Waris Shah**', the **immortal bard of Punjab**, writer of the famous Punjabi love tragedy, **Heer Ranjha**. The writer invokes him to arise from his grave, record the Punjab's tragedy and turn over a new page in Punjab's history.

The novel has two parallel ends. Laajo returns to her family and Puro accepts her family. Along with accepting Rashid's love for her she was blinded by the mother-hood for her son Javed and the adopted child whom she loves equally. Ramchand, her fiancé is married to her own younger sister. All these together play an important role in her decision declaring Rashid and Pakistan her home.

The film too has the parallel ends as the novel. But in the film, the director makes this decision comparatively difficult for Puro. Unlike the source text Hamida has lost her child as she miscarries it; the Hindus of her village have taken away her adopted child calling him the son of a Hindu mother; Ramchand is still a bachelor as he had rejected the suggestion of his marriage to Puro's sister. The only attachment is her developing affection, understanding and forgiving Rashid. She declares Rashid as her truth and Pakistan as her home.

CONCLUSION:

Even after bringing the necessary changes in the film Pinjar, the director has tried to maintain the theme of its source text without giving any complex narration. Amrita Pritam's Pinjar tells the story of love and hate, feelings of reconciliation, recovery and re-accepting of women abducted in different circumstances during Pre-partition and Partition periods. With visible shifts, Dr. Chandraprakash Dwivedi, the director of the film Pinjar has maintained the story of love and hate where love finally triumphs. In the able hands of Dwivedi Pinjar, the novel is transformed into a sensitive screenplay with a different sensitive approach, thereby a successful film.

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