

Adaptation – A Technique of Translation

Nidhi Sanjay Swadi

MA English (3rd Sem)

School of Humanities and Social Sciences

Jain University, Bangalore

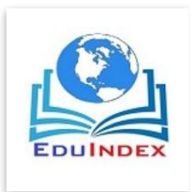
Email- nidhiswadi@gmail.com

Abstract:

In recent years, adaptation has become a popular technique of translation. The Oxford English Dictionary defines adaptation as having plurality of meanings and applications, alluding to the process of changing to suit an alternative purpose, function, or environment. It can be considered as re-writing or re-creating a literary work to maintain the same impact. It is the replacement of cultural element in the original text to suit the needs of target language culture. Themes, storyline are retained with modification in cultural references according to the target audience. To translate a work efficiently, one must go beyond the meaning of words. One must understand the entire situation and the emotions that are evoked therein. Language, being a part of culture, opens the door to understand a specific culture. The shift in cultural environment demands re-creating a piece of work. The re-creation is modification of the source-text's context. The adaptation also raises the question of loyalty to the original text. This paper attempts to analyse the technique of adaptation with specific reference to Shakespeare's great tragedy Macbeth. The cinematographic adaptation of Macbeth as Maqbool (2003) by Vishal Bharadwaj illustrates the change of cultural environment from that of Scottish society to Mumbai's Mafia gang. The paper interprets the adaptation techniques with illustrations from the film. The universal concerns of the play have been kept intact. The adaptation is loyal to the theme - thirst for power, blood-shed, guilt, tragedy. However, Vishal Bharadwaj has used a different plot unfolding.

Key-words:

Re-create, Culture, Politics, Macbeth, Maqbool



“The writer thinks less of writing originally, and more of rewriting”

Edward Said, ‘On Originality’

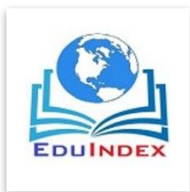
In the contemporary world, translation has gained importance. It has been seen as an act of rendering a text into another language. Translation being a bilingual activity, a given text undergoes transformation from one language (called the ‘source’ language) to another (called target language). The lack of a common language underlines the importance, significance and need for translation. A good translation goes beyond mere paraphrasing of the original. Samuel Johnson defines translation as “Change into another language retaining the sense.” [1]. Translation as an art transfers the meaning from source language (SL) to target language (TL); as a craft, carries over the meaning and as a science, substitutes the meaning of SL words to TL words. Translator is criticized as a traitor considering the act of translation as derivative.

“If for the West, translation is an “art” (Theodore Savory’s term), a craft (Eric Jacobson’s term), and “science” (Eugene Nide’s term), for the East, it is “bhashantar”, “rupantar”, and “anukarana”, meaning “change of language”, “change of form”, and “imitation” respectively. This roughly corresponds to John Dryden’s three types of translation ‘metaphrase’, ‘paraphrase’, and ‘imitation’ ” (Das 2019: 112). The three ‘T’s - ‘translation’, “transliteration” and “transcreation” form the essential components in Indian context of translation. Transliteration is a mere change of the script used whereas translation considers the meaning of a word from SL to TL. When a message does not directly translate from one language to another, transcreation is employed to preserve the intent of the source information. Transcreation is the creative adaptation of source text into target text. It is not the replacement of the original, but a faithful reproduction. Adaptation and appropriation are the forms of intertextuality. An adaptation signals relationship with an informing source text or original. On the other hand, appropriation frequently affects a more decisive journey away from the informing source into a wholly new cultural product and domain. [2] In recent years, adaptation has become a popular technique of translation. The Oxford English Dictionary defines adaptation as having plurality of meanings and applications, alluding to the process of changing to suit an alternative purpose, function, or environment. Words hold a special meaning in any given cultural context. By adaptation, the cultural context is relocated to make the reader understand this special meaning. Thus adaptations play an important role in decoding and relocating the symbols used in a language or cultural system.

If the creative leeway between script and performance is wide in the production of plays, it is enormous when adaptation crosses media boundaries. Dudley Andrew has distinguished three different kinds of film adaptation: 1) *Borrowing* is close to the intertextuality of all art, the kind of casual appropriation of stories, ideas, situations that would appear to be in any creative act. 2) *Intersecting* is what filmmakers do when they try to come as close as they can be original, using the different media of cinema to bring out as faithfully as possible the world and texture of the original. 3) *Transforming* is adaptation that seeks to deploy the full power of cinematic techniques and material both to remain faithful to the original and at the same time to make a full transformation of it in the new medium. [3]

Many canonical texts are adopted in theatre, film, television etc. It may involve director’s point of view, or cultural relocation or change of context. This gives rise to the questions of ownership. However, adaptation is different from citation. Citation is mere acknowledgement but adaptation is recasting a work in a new form. Adaptation can be considered as a varitable marker of canonical text whereas citation infers authority.

Shakespeare’s works have been widely adapted across the world. One such cinematographic adaptation of his tragedy *Macbeth* is *Maqbool* (2003). This film by Vishaal Bharadwaj, who is widely



known for his adaptations, re-narrates *Macbeth* in the Indian context. Bharadwaj has taken Mumbai Underworld as the setting. Many Bollywood movies have been set in Mumbai reflecting the life in the economic hub. Mumbai being the centre for trade and commerce has been the centre for political activities too. Scotland's politics of the 11th century forms the basis for the tragedy *Macbeth*. It has been transformed to Indian context of politics and Mafia.

The protagonist Maqbool (Irrfan Khan) who plays the role of Macbeth is loyal to underworld don Jahangir Khan alias Abbaji (Pankaj Kapur) who plays King Duncan. The three witches are replaced by the two policemen Pandit (Om Puri) and Purohit (Naseeruddin Shah) who predict Maqbool's power. People can relate to the concept of witches with the Indian concept of horoscope prediction. The two policemen reflect the corrupt system that protects the dons. However they also manipulate the situations a lot. Their dialogue, "Shakti ka santulan bahut zaroori hai sansar mein" and "Aag ke liye paani ka dar bane rehna chahiye", replaces the famous dialogue of the witches- "Fair is foul, foul is fair" and reflects the tactics used by them. Pandit is an astrologer with "kaali zubaan". He predicts Maqbool gaining the control over Bollywood similar to Macbeth becoming the Thane of Cowdor. When the prophecy comes true, Maqbool is provoked by Nimmi (Tabu), who plays Lady Macbeth, to kill Abbaji and gain power. Nimmi, mistress of Abbaji, loves Maqbool. Though hesitant, Maqbool shoots Abbaji to death and is covered by Nimmi. Maqbool enjoys the power but hatred is born between him and Kaka (Banquo). Maqbool got him murdered and also tries to get Guddu (Fleance) murdered. Similar to Macbeth's hallucination, we see Maqbool haunted by the dead. However we see a difference in the character of Lady Macbeth. Lady Macbeth dies insane without an heir. But, Nimmi gives birth to a child, after which she goes mad and meets death in the end. Though Maqbool plans to escape, he meets the same fate of Macbeth. At the end, both Maqbool and Nimmi realize their mistake and die in guilt.

Bharadwaj has also added Indian politics in the cinematic adaptation. The film holds a mirror to corrupt politicians who support the underworld activities. However, Bharadwaj also portrays officers like D.C.P. Davesare who perform their duties loyally. Loyalty and honesty over-power the corrupt. Thus we see the shift from European set-up to Indian. The Indian strong belief in astrology is also portrayed through the character of Pandit. The concept of chastity of woman is also raised. Maqbool's suspicion on the legitimacy of child, on knowing the pregnancy of Nimmi shows this aspect clearly.

The concept of evil plays an important role in the play as well as the film. Most of the events in *Macbeth* take place at night. Though *Maqbool* has scenes at night, we equally see the scenes set during the day. Blood imagery is widely seen in both. However, we see Maqbool haunted by blood even before he kills Abbaji. This reflects his hesitation over to commit the murder. Nimmi unlike Lady Macbeth's sleep-walking, suffers extreme agony of sleeplessness. The greed and thirst of power makes the couple take the path of evil, which ultimately results in their downfall.

The replacement of witches by policemen shows two concerns: change of gender and change of profession. The three witches are the sisters who talk about the evil. Shakespeare might have chosen witches as his character due to the religious changes which saw the witchcraft as an act of pagan. However, *Maqbool* has policemen in order to reflect the image of policemen as seen by the common men. In general Indian context, policemen are seen as corrupt officials who exercise power to manipulate the truth. Bharadwaj has also combined religion with the profession, thus adding more power to his characters.

The movie has all the Bollywood masalas such as a love, hatred, ceremonies, and item number. Though the murder scenes in *Maqbool* are comparatively delayed, it has the same effect on the audience. The universal issues such as thirst for power, blood-shed, hatred, guilt are kept intact with fidelity to the source text. However, Bharadwaj employs a different plot unfolding suitable to the Indian context. As *Macbeth* cautions us narrating the dangers of being over-ambitious, so does *Maqbool*. This cinematic adaptation proves that Shakespeare's works have not only passed the test of time, but also have survived across the language, culture, social set-up.



Think India (Quarterly Journal)

ISSN: 0971-1260 Vol-22, Special Issue-06

International Conference on Indigenous Languages and Translation Studies

held on Saturday, 3rd August 2019

Venue- Seminar Hall, **School of Humanities and Social Sciences**, Jain Deemed-to-be-University, Palace Road, Bengaluru, India



We should thus see adaptation as creating a new cultural and aesthetic possibility. It does not rob a text but rather is inspired by it. In turn, text is also enriched in the adapted form.

Works Cited:

[1] Bijay Kumar Das, 'Translation Across the World: Theory and Praxis'. *IUP* (2019).

[2] Juile Sanders, 'What is Appropriation?' *Adaptation and Appropriation*. London: Rotledge (2007).

[3] H. Abbott, 'Adaptation Across Media' *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative Second Edition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2008)

Knight, Wilson (1989). 'Macbeth and the Metaphysic of Evil' *The Wheel of Fire*. London: Routledge. 160-180