

The Film Adaptation of 'Suitable Boy': An Overview

By

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Abstract

This article is a modest attempt to study the film adaptation of Vikram Seth's novel "Suitable Boy" by Mira Nair in 1993. In the twentieth century, film adaptation has considerably influenced the producers and directors in dealing with various stories and presenting them to society with a clear message to change society's perspective, thoughts, actions, and habits. Mira Nair artistically brings to light the character portrayed by Seth in his magnum opus, "Suitable Boy." The characters like Rupa Mehara, Lata Mehara, Savita Mehara, Arun Mehra, Varun Mehra, Mann Kapoor, Pran Kapoor, Saeeda Bai, Mahesh Kapoor, and Harish Khanna are lifelike; subsequently, it appeals to the reader. The study aims to compare the book's narrative to its film adaptation and, secondarily, to give insight into how Mira Nair tried to provide entertainment and satisfy the curiosity of the heterogeneous audience.

Keywords: Marriage, Compassionate, Adaptation, Narrative, Family.

Introduction

With exponential growth and development in science & technology, the film industry scaled greater heights. Subsequently, writers and directors attempted to bring various forms of literature on digital platforms, like television, radio, cinema, and films. Producers & writers quickly adopted the change and harnessed the technology to adapt various books and stories into movies and television series. The goal is not to entertain the audience but to give a message to society, and Mira Nair is not an exception to this viewpoint. Some examples of the film adaptation in English literature are To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee (1962) and, Sense and Sensibility by Jane Auston (1995), Five Point Someone novel by Chetan Bhagat, some of which gained popularity after the release of their adaptations. The true sense of adaptation is related to how one should communicate a definite idea, which is associated with the literary meaning established by the author (Tan 36). Recognising and acknowledging adaptation's vital role as an intermediary between literature and film is essential.

The film is a popular medium for communicating one's idea, thought, or belief to society; using this medium can bring reform to the community, and its impact is indelible. The genre film can deal with sensitive topics with great ease. Film's intertextual and interdisciplinary origins need to be explored in the context of literature and the humanities (Tan 46). Both literature and film employ narrative to tell stories, but writers can only express themselves on paper. In contrast, the film is a more polished version of the text since it is enriched with audio and visual effects.

Writer's Creative Characters and Producer's Stars

Generally, producers and directors must remember that the readers are attached to the world created by the writers and the characters that infuse life in those pages. It is generally acknowledged that some changes are bound to be made in an adaptation. However, filmmakers tend to be rather blazed about those changes, forgetting how the audience may feel. Many adaptations seem all right superficially; however, reading the original story and its screencast contradicts them. The picturisation of characters may be different from the writer's creation. Mira Nair successfully transformed every aspect of the text into the film truthfully and realistically. Lata finds herself through the sea of suitors and literature and her family and the propriety of nineteen-fifties Indian life, and to weave those strands of essentially a personal, humanist look at family life into a look at a country that was trying to find itself after establishing its freedom. Nair justified the writer's view by presenting the characters from Seth's point of view.

Tanya Maniktala as Lata Mehra

Ishaan Khattar as Mann Kapoor

Danesh Razvi as Kabir Durrani

Tabu as Saeeda Bai

Shahana Goswami as Meenakshi Mehra

Rasika Dugal as Savita Kapoor

Mahira Kakkar as Rupa Mehra

Ram Kapoor as Mahesh Kapoor

Namit Das as Haresh Khanna

Mira Nair astoundingly found a perfect match for each character portrayed by Seth.

Love

A fundamental aspect of Hindu tradition is arranged marriage. The relationships between parents and children, husbands and wives, fathers and sons, sisters and sisters, friends and friends are well portrayed in *Suitable Boy*. Mira Nair accurately captures the relationship Seth represents in his masterpiece novel in her cinematic adaptation. Lata Mehra (Tanya Maniktala) and Kabir Durrani (Danesh Razvi), the notable characters, stunned the audience with love. Despite coming from different families, their dedication to their partnership is strong. In her love relationship, Lata never crossed the 'Laxman-rekha' moral frame of society since she profoundly respects the Indian traditional system. She balances her relationship with Kabir and her family because she does not want to defy their expectations. The two opposing elements that Seth used to illustrate the love affair are still alive in Indian culture pointed out by Mira Nair. One is the bond of faith and trusts that Lata and Kabir stand for. Meenakshi and Arun are other examples of a deceitful relationship because Meenakshi had an extramarital affair with Billy Irani.

Marriage

Marriage is the central theme of the book *The Suitable Boy*, from beginning to end. In India, one of the most important cultural institutions is marriage, which unites two hearts and the customs, beliefs, and traditions of two different families. Families from the Kapoors and Mehra celebrated Holi and the hue of love, happiness, and prosperity. On the other hand, the Mehra family reached out to the Kapoor household to offer support while the Kapoor family was struggling following the loss of Mahesh Kapoor's wife and the younger son, Mann Kapoor,

was detained by the police for trying to murder Firoz Khan. It signifies that traditions play an important role in India regardless of times of happiness or misery.

Sexuality

Is sexuality a necessary component of life, or is it merely a source of pleasure, or is it the media that fosters a close relationship between the couple? In her film adaptation, Mira Nair skillfully captures all these aspects of sexuality. Despite the age difference, she never hesitated to depict the close friendship between Saeeda Bai (courtesan) and Mann Kapoor. Although she knows that this kind of relationship is never tolerated in Indian culture, she never neglects its existence. Ishaan Khattar and Tabu did an exceptional job portraying the roles of Mann Kapoor and Saeeda Bai, respectively (Sing 18). Even Nair made an effort to explain Arun and Meenakshi's sexual interaction. Meenakshi was not content with Arun, so she defied social conventions and had an adulterous relationship with Billy to satiate her sexual appetite. Here, Mira Nair emphasises the significance of Indian women's existence and their need for love and sexuality. The female characters Seth represents, like Meenakshi, Lata, Savita, Saeeda Bai, and Kakoli Chatterji, are a perfect example of this.

Religion and Politics

Politics and religion are still burning issues in today's India. We all believe in the existence of God as a supreme power, but we do not have the right to use it for evil purposes, particularly in politics. *Suitable Boy* is set just after India's independence, so the religious and political issues reflected in the book are not surprising. Raja of Marth (Manoj Pahwa) planned to construct a Shiva temple before the mosque to demoralize the Muslim population. Whenever Muslims read namaz on their knees, they simultaneously bend in front of a Hindu idol. This evil intention of Raja of Marth was reflected in the riots.

In contrast, Mann protected Firoz from a Hindu attack during the riots between Hindus and Muslims, despite Firoz being a Muslim. Nair tries to convey to everyone that while religion is not essential, humanity is more important and that India is known worldwide for its kindness. Though Saeeda Bai Firozabadi enjoyed most of all singing the ghazals of Mir and Ghalib, she also sang a happy description of young Krishna. In her prayers, she began-

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate
Praise belongs to God, the Lord of all Being,
The All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate
Guide us on the straight path,
The path those whom Thou hast blessed.
These manifest her respect for all religions (Seth 134).

Education, Friendship, and Responsibilities

Everyone is aware of the value of education in the twenty-first century. The *Suitable Boy* was released in 1993, a year in which no one denied the importance of education. The eldest son of Mahesh Kapoor, Pran Kapoor, holds a position as a professor in the English department. He was a member of the syllabus committee, so he aspired to include information about James Joyce in the syllabus. On the contrary, Prof. Mishra, a senior department member, was against this decision. Pran believed that education was the best way to make someone financially independent. He was determined not to depend on his father for financial support.

He was not concerned about title prestige, but he understood the value of education for one's plans. It exhibits his admiration for education (Seth 57). While Mann Kapoor is a Hindu by religion, he wants to learn Urdu. Saeeda Bai assisted him in picking up the Urdu language. The main character, Lata, studied English literature at Brahampur University. She participated in a stage play at her college, exemplifying her passion for literature.

Nair pointed out the various aspects mentioned in *Suitable Boy* in her film adaptation with great ease; friendship is one of them. She depicted the friendships between Lata and Malati, Rupa Mehara and Kalpana Gaur, Mann and Firoz, Rasheed and Manne, Mahesh Kapoor and Nawab Sahib. All characters not only become part of happiness, but the assistant puts everybody in an unfavourable and distraught condition. When Lata fell in love with Kabir Durrani, Malati was the first to make her aware that Kabir was a Muslim by religion. Lata knew that her family had never allowed her to marry Kabir, only because of his religion. Lata broke up the relationship with Kabir because she felt that Kabir was hiding his true identity. After this breakup, she found herself helpless, and only Malati played the role of a true friend by helping her escape such a distressing condition. One more example that was the epitome of friendship was Mann and Firoz. Besides their religion, they supported one another. Mann rescued Firoz's life from Hindus during the riot, and Firoz hid the Mann accused in court. Mahesh Kapoor and Nawab Sahib of Baitar are both active in politics and good friends because Mann Kapoor, Mahesh Kapoor's younger son, attempted to murder Firoz Khan, the son of Nawab sahib Baitar. This act created clashes between these faithful friends, which created distance in their friendship. However, when Mahesh Kapoor becomes the prey in politics, Nawab Sahib Baitar rushes to help him escape such a situation.

Responsibility is crucial because it gives people a sense of direction and helps society develop resilience in the face of hardship. As a mother, Rupa Mehra always cared about her children's well-being and worried about the marriage of her younger daughter, Lata Mehra. She followed her responsibility by choosing Harish Khanna, a perfect groom for her daughter. Savita held herself responsible in the case of Lata. She always proved her sisterhood by giving Lata appropriate advice when she was puzzled. Being an elder brother, Pran Kapoor always motivated his younger brother Mann to join in positive activities.

Conclusion

Mira Nair anglicised the world of Indians, which is a real world, too, and was so beautifully and funnily brought to life by her. Even Lata herself would have thought and dreamt mainly in English and spoken to her family in both languages (Chotiner 1). The film adaptation is a medium for those who do not like reading a novel since it provides a visual effect that is more remarkable than reading one. Nair was aware of this fact. She tried to give justice to the story splendidly well and chose the face in the movie pleasing to the audience. However, Nair dealt with controversial subjects like sexuality, politics, and religious strife without hurting the community's faith. She paid great attention to balancing historical details and cultural nuances.

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