

Block**4****GENRES OF POPULAR LITERATURE III: GRAPHIC AND
VISUAL NARRATIVES**

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BLOCK INTRODUCTION

This is a very interesting block in the sense that this course of four blocks has been about popular literature. Block I introduced the genre of Popular Literature explaining what is meant by the genre of popular literature, the difference between canonical and popular literature, it looked at the academic and critical approaches to the study of popular literature and the status of popular literature in this day and age. Block II introduced us to an important genre of popular Literature which was Children's Literature. Block III looked at Detective and Science Fiction and finally Block IV looks at Graphic and Visual Narratives and Adaptation to Cinema. Chances are you'll find this block much more interesting as it essentially deals with a comic (if I may call it that), a short story and a Hindi movie! Anyway, do ensure that you read *Bhimayana*, by **Subhash Vyam**, **S Anand**, **Durga Bai Vyam**, and **Srividya Natarajan**; and read **Ruskin Bond**'s short story *The Blue Umbrella*. The PDF version may be found on this site... https://www.espeeglobal.com/media/contentpage_99_30_7.pdf

And try and watch **Vishal Bharadwaj**'s films such as *Haider*, *Maqbool*, *Omkara*, *Pataakha*, *Rangoon*, *7 Khoon Maaf*, *Matru Ki Bijli Ka Mandola*, *The Blue Umbrella*, *Makdee*, amongst others. Don't forget the first on your **To Watch List** should be *The Blue Umbrella*! Good luck with your work and have fun doing this block!

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UNIT 1 *BHIMAYANA: EXPERIENCES OF UNTOUCHABILITY*

Structure

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1.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we shall examine the Graphic Novel as a genre, and trace the development of the Indian Graphic novel, and look at a graphic novel titled - *Bhimayana: Experiences of Untouchability* (2011) by **Srividya Natarajan** and **S Anand** with illustration by **Durgabai** and **Subhash Vyam**.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

We will begin by looking at the life and times of Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar briefly. Ambedkar is chiefly remembered as the architect of the Constitution of India, but equally important is his contribution in shaping the Dalit movement and awakening Dalit consciousness in India. His academic accomplishments remain unparalleled, his speeches and writings, an expression of his intelligence, rationality and articulate arguments. **Valerian Rodrigues** remarks that “in his public life, Ambedkar was observed in several roles: as scholar, teacher, lawyer, parliamentarian, administrator, journalist, publicist, negotiator, agitationist, leader, and devotee.” Let us examine his life and times in some detail next.

1.2 LIFE AND TIMES OF DR B R AMBEDKAR

Dr B R Ambedkar was born in 1891 to **Bhimabai** and **Ramji Sakpal**, in Mhow (present day Madhya Pradesh) where his father worked as a headmaster in an Army School. After Ambedkar was born, his father retired, and the family moved

to Dapoli, in the Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra. Ambedkar attended an English school at Satara in 1900, where his father worked as a storekeeper in the Army. Ambedkar was given this last name by a Brahmin teacher at the camp school, who, was fond of him. At school Ambedkar was forced to sit separately from his classmates, due to the observances of caste separation. In 1904, the family shifted to Bombay, to enable the children to receive better education. He is considered to be the second person from the Mahar community to have matriculated in 1907. He married **Ramabai Walangkar** and had four children of whom only one survived.

The Maharaja of Baroda provided Ambedkar with financial assistance to enable him to join Elphinstone College, where he graduated with English and Persian as major subjects. The Maharaja of Baroda continued to finance his higher education which enabled Ambedkar to attend Columbia University from 1913 to 1916. In Columbia University, he studied Economics and Sociology and was deeply influenced by **John Dewey**, (renowned for his work on educational, psychological and democratic theories), and **Edwin Seligman** (a public-finance specialist and an acclaimed scholar and teacher of Economics). His first publication "Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development" was an outcome of his studies there. He earned his Master's Degree from Columbia University in 1915. In 1916 he enrolled at for the Bar Course at Gray's Inn, but had to return to India due to a paucity of funds. In 1917, he returned to Baroda to work as the Military Secretary to the Maharaja of Baroda for granting him financial aid. Ambedkar faced discrimination both in the office as well as at the Parsi inn where he stayed.

From 1918 to 1920, he taught at Sydenham College of Commerce in Bombay. In 1920, he started the newspaper *Mooknayak* (The Leader of the Voiceless). The same year, he went to London and attended the London School of Economics and Political Science. He completed his M Sc, D Sc and eventually qualified for the Bar as well. His M Sc thesis was titled "*Provincial Decentralisation of Imperial Finance in British India*" and the D Sc thesis was titled "*The Problem of the Rupee*". He returned to India and worked as a lawyer in the Bombay High Court and taught at Batliboi's Accountancy Training Institute and later at Government Law College, Bombay. It was only after 1923, that Dr Ambedkar got involved with reforming the Mahar community. Despite his academic accomplishments, Dr Ambedkar was persistently discriminated against in academic and professional circles as recorded by **Eleanor Zelliot** in *Ambedkar's World*. Ambedkar founded the Bahishkrit Hitkarni Sabha in 1924. His Ph D Thesis titled "*The Evolution of Provincial Finance*" was published in 1925. He led the *Mahad Satyagraha* in 1927. The same year, he also started the journal *Bahishkrit Bharat* (Excluded India). His Ph D Degree was published and awarded in 1927.

In 1930, he was elected President of the **All India Depressed Classes Congress** and he started another journal the *Janata*. Though Ambedkar was initially moderate in his views, he later turned increasingly in favour of a separate electorate for the Depressed Classes. In 1932, a separate electorate was granted to the 'Untouchables', but Mahatma Gandhi proceeded to a fast unto death; resulting in the Poona Pact which mentioned a joint electorate with reservations for the Depressed Classes. The disagreements with Gandhi and the Poona Pact still remains a controversial issue among Dalit thinkers who believe it was a manoeuvre to co-opt the Dalit voice. Ambedkar was appointed Principal of the

Government Law College, Bombay, in 1935 and, he remained there for two years. His book *Annihilation of Caste* was published in 1936. The book is a very strong critique of orthodox Hindu leaders and the caste system. His second book *Who Were the Shudras*, was published in 1946, wherein Ambedkar has tried to trace and explain the formation of the Shudra caste.

In independent India, he became the first Law minister (1947-1951) and the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Indian Constitution. Ambedkar acknowledged the Mahatma Buddha, Mahatma Phule, a Maharashtrian social reformer of the 19th century, and credited with having started the first school for Dalit girls; and authoring *Gulamgiri* (Slavery); and Sant Kabir, a *Bhakti* poet of the medieval ages who questioned rigid traditional beliefs about faith. The three of them – the Mahatma Buddha, Mahatma Phule and Sant kabir were his three Gurus. It was during the 1950s that he was decisively drawn towards Buddhism and its practices, and along with thousands of his followers converted to Buddhism on 14th October 1956 in Nagpur. Ambedkar died in 1957. Having examined Ambedkar's life in some detail, we shall take a look at what a graphic novel is and then move on to understanding the Indian Graphic Novel before we present the over view of *Bhimayana*.

Check your progress 1

- 1) Why do you think Bhimayana has been included as a part of a course on Popular Literature?

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- 2) Discuss the life and times of Dr B R Ambedkar.

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1.3 GRAPHIC NOVELS TO GRAPHIC NARRATIVES

In this section, we shall look at a different genre, the graphic narrative briefly, as you may recall you have read some details on it in Unit 1 of Block 2 while discussing the various genres of Children's Literature. The Graphic Novel has been described by **Eddie Campbell** as:

“First, it is used simply as a synonym for comic books... Second, it is used to classify a format – for example, a bound book of comics either in soft or hardcover- in contrast to the old-fashioned staple comic magazine. Third, it means, more specifically, a comic-book narrative that is equivalent in form and dimensions to the prose novel. Finally, others employ it to indicate a form that is more than a comic book in the scope of its ambition- indeed, a new medium altogether.”

(quoted by Pramod K. Nayar The Indian Graphic Novel: Nation, History and Critique 4)

Lila Christensen states *“in contrast to superhero comic books, graphic novels are more serious, often non-fiction, full-length, sequential art novels that explore the issues of race, social justice, global conflict, and war with intelligence and humor.”* (quoted by Pramod K Nayar, ‘Towards’ 3). Graphic novels carry both written text and images, thereby, allowing the meaning to be constructed by both that is seen and that which is read. It is an alliance of the two modes which conjoin to create meaning. Just as the reader can understand many meanings in the written text, the visual images can also have multiple and often layered meanings. The ways of seeing may differ and so can the meanings. It makes reading a graphic novel a deeply engaging experience as the act of decoding the explicit and the implicit are carried out simultaneously. Prominent graphic novels include **Art Spiegelman’s** *Mauss*, **Marjane Satrapi’s** *Persepolis*, **Joe Sacco’s** *Palestine*, and **Ho Che Anderson’s** *King*, amongst others.

However, we may note that, the terminology has evolved a bit and the “in” term today is what is called the ‘Graphic Narratives’, a preferred option these days according to Pramod Nayar, *“‘Graphic Narrative’ as a descriptor and label references both the visual component of the medium (‘graphic’) as the crafting and telling of a story (‘narrative’)*. As mentioned above, the term Graphic Narrative also, does not limit attention only to the form but also entwines the manner of unfolding the story, and that is how the evolution from the larger label of comics, to the specific, and yet, encompassing term of ‘Graphic Narrative’ has happened as the genre developed. In the next subsection, we look at the Indian Graphic narrative in some detail.

1.3.1 Indian Graphic Narratives

The late 1960s and early 70s witnessed a large scale production of comics in India. *Amar Chitra Katha* is widely regarded as among the first and most prominent of this genre. During the last decade, however, the appeal of comics from joyful reading has transformed into thought-provoking exercises as suggested by **Nandini Chandra** in, “The Fear of Iconoclasm: Genre and Medium Transformations from Comics to Graphic Novels in *Amar Chitra Katha*, *Bhimayana*, and *Munnu*”. Critics such as **Varughese**, often argue that recent trends in the Indian Graphic Narratives do not bear much similarity to *Amar Chitra Katha*. It is also interesting to note that the Indian Graphic Narratives are placed within the wider category of Indian Writing in English (IWE) as issues discussed in IWE are also to be found in the graphic narratives, through a more accessible medium. The subjects include alternate histories, urban landscape, milieu and social issues. Pramod K Nayar believes that in order to understand its composite ‘grammar’ – the form, themes, language, art and its underpinnings of politics – its critique, satire and comments; all need to be analysed.

Moreover, the relationship of history with graphic narratives both in terms of form and content also lends a degree of seriousness to the genre thereby, in a sense differentiating it from comics. Graphic narratives draw our attention to not only alternate versions of history, but also to how that history is represented, and how it can be represented. Interestingly, graphic narratives often present the narrative as oral recollections that merge words and images as observed by Pramod K Nayar. Economic liberalisation that led to increase in disposable income and leisure time, in the last few decades, has also enabled the publishing of Indian Graphic Narratives. Not only that, the circuits of production, marketing and distribution of books, the advent of literature festivals and easier availability of printed material, has also lent to its recent popularity, says Varughese. Some of the prominent Indian Graphic Narratives are **Orijit Sen's** *The River of Stories*, usually regarded as the first Indian Graphic Narrative, **Sarnath Banerjee's** *Corridor*, **Amruta Patil's** *Kari*, and **Vishwajyoti Ghosh's** *Delhi Calm*. The next subsection will examine *Bhimayana* as an Indian Graphic Narrative.

1.3.2 *Bhimayana* as a Graphic Narrative

Let us try and understand how *Bhimayana* is carefully called a graphic book (in the publishing details) but, is commonly considered and read under the wider rubric of graphic novels. Apart from English, translations of *Bhimayana* are available in Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Hindi, Kannada and Malayalam. As S Anand argues, this book seeks to enlighten the non-Dalits and the privileged castes to open their eyes and minds to caste oppression. Apart from being a wakeup call on caste prejudices, and hence, a pedagogical tool, the Gond art illustrations enables the complete transformation of *Bhimayana*.

“Bhimayana radicalizes the form of the comic book as well as the genre of the biography.”

(Pramod K Nayar “Towards a postcolonial critical literacy: Bhimayana and the Indian graphic novel” 3)

Graphic novels usually follow a pattern of sequential art. However, in *Bhimayana*, sequential art is done away with. The panels are not rigidly demarcated, they flow conveying a sense of rhythmic movement of time and the ways in which Gond worldview is imagined and expressed. It also enables a visual scanning of multiple instances. The narrative is arranged in such a way that events, thoughts, reflections and newspaper reports are placed together to enable a composite meaning and not merely a sequential one. The title suggests a narration of Bhim's life, just as the *Ramayana* narrates the life of Rama. *Bhimayana* is based on the text, *Ambedkar: Autobiographical Notes* also a *Navayana* publication indicating that the storyboard is intended to be faithful to the original. These notes appear in a segment entitled “Waiting for a Visa” comprising of six ‘autobiographical illustrations’ in a multi volume work *Ambedkar: Writing and Speeches* edited by **Vasant Moon**.

It is conjectured that there may have been more such reminiscences probably lost. The link between the title and the illustrations is not defined. The *Mahad Satyagraha*, the Ambedkar-Gandhi debate and the conversion to Buddhism have been incorporated to give a sense of completion to this book. As a biography, the graphic representation of selected events in the life of an individual focuses on the struggles against oppression. The word ‘graphic’ here implies the visual aspect

of the chosen medium and also a detailed description of caste based discriminations. The events and their experiences however, are not limited to an individual but extend to a disfranchised community. The relation between the historical conditions and the life of the individual is also probed. Events are mentioned along with the years of occurrence. Experiences are recounted through memory burdened by the inheritance of caste discriminations. The unshaped, scattered and fragmentary nature of memory is expressed through the graphic narrative highlighting its co-existence with reflections on the same observes, Pramod K Nayar in “Radical Graphics: Martin Luther King, Jr., B R Ambedkar, and Comics Auto/Biography”.

Bhimayana can be read as an alternate history acknowledging Ambedkar’s constant struggles against caste and untouchability, wherein, caste is a part of the contemporary discourse. The image of the ‘pointed finger’ on the cover of the book recurs throughout the narrative, and indicates exclusion and blatant caste targets. Dialogues, written statements, thoughts, newspaper articles, headlines, the multiplicity of expressions does not give prominence or primacy to any single mode, but, seeks to incorporate all voices as equally important says Pramod K Nayar in “Towards a post-colonial critical literacy: *Bhimayana* and the Indian Graphic Novel”. Having looked at the cover design, the debates that are taken up in *Bhimayana*, it would be pertinent to spend a little time examining the detailing of Gond Art next.

Check Your Progress 2

1) What are graphic narratives?

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2) Discuss the development of Indian Graphic Narratives.

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3) How is *Bhimayana* different as a biography?

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1.4 GOND ART

The *Gonds* are regarded as one of the largest tribal groups in South Asia with an estimated population of more than four million. Their presence is noted in the Deccan Peninsula and mainly in the Madhya Pradesh region of central India, as reported in *Outlook* and *Down to Earth*. Within the Gond community, the *Pardhans* have a special status and responsibility as they are the repositories of the wisdom and beliefs of the Gond community, maintained through their oral culture of folksongs and folktales. They safeguard and convey local histories, genealogies of families, myths and legends, and were traditionally under the patronage of the Gond community. But with the passage of time, modernisation, reduced resources, both their performances and resulting means of support are on the decline.

Udayan Vajpayee in an insightful study notes that, the “*Pardhan’s have been the priests, story-tellers and musicians of the Gonds. In a way they have been the carriers of the collective memory of the Gond tribal communities... They did not till land or rear animals. Every third year the Pardhans would go to the family of their Gond patron. Every Pardhan family had a number of Gond families as their patrons.*” The Pardhan Gonds were credited with the task of carrying on the narratives of family histories, genealogies, myths and legends through their folksongs. A new turn was further added when **Jangarh Singh Shyam**’s penchant for paintings was discovered and gained international recognition. He belonged to Patangarh and inspired scores of artists to follow in his footsteps. His contribution is greatly recognised for inspiring and helping other Gond artisans to eke out a living as professional artists. This school of art has been named ‘Jangarh Kalam’.

Udayan Vajpayee says, “*It won’t be an exaggeration to say that this school of art initiated by Jangarh is nothing but painted narrative song. Now the deities were waking up in colour, throbbing in lines, and went peering through dots. The stories, instead of finding expression through song, were manifesting themselves now on canvas.*”

Gond art has shifted mediums from the oral to the visual, from folk songs and folk tales to art and later painting and is acknowledged as one of the most prominent indigenous arts. The aural quality is reflected in the dots, dashes, and curvatures of the images. Vajpayee adds further, “*At the same time as it is a new form of the narrative, it is a song to grieve the old form, music. It is a remembrance of home, and a grieving over its loss. The next stage of ‘Jangarh Kalam’ is sculpture, which means that some Pardhans are now beginning to turn to sculpture under the influence of the paintings of this school.*”

The Night Life of Trees, depicts the centrality of trees in Gond beliefs, both as a life force and one that provides shade, food and sustains life, trees being both revered and celebrated. In an interview S Anand says that “*this kind of art, which is not realistic but suggestive and conceptual*” could be used for the purpose of a graphic novel. Gond art could be both murals as well as abstract geometrical designs and conceptual sketches. As it is drawn on special occasions, it gets largely erased annually and then be created again.

Durgabai and Subhash Vyam state that “Our art is *khulla* (open) where there’s space for all to breathe.” (pg. 100) This idea of open spaces as liberating and free

defines Gond art as depicted in the *Bhimayana*. The usual rigid boxes entrapping characters, is done away with. *Bhimayana* is a refreshing and exceptionally unique take on the graphic book.

Inspired by Gond art there are three distinct kind of speech bubbles used in the *Bhimayana*. The bird shaped one to convey the soft speech of characters targeted by caste prejudices, the sting shaped ones carries sharp venomous words used by characters that follow caste distinctions and the thought bubble attached to the sketches of eyes signifying perception not expressed.

1.4.1 Digna Pattern

Since graphic novels lack the usual page breaks, the illustrators used the Gond digna pattern in *Bhimayana* to suggest page breaks. The *digna* was originally used to design patterns on the walls and floors of Gond homes, and was considered auspicious. The same pattern is used in *Bhimayana* to carve divisions on pages, as tubular shapes not only form divisions on page but also become pathways and streets, vehicles moving along those streets, along with animals and birds. In *Bhimayana* the digna patterns replaces the page margins maybe indicating the earlier marginalised state of the Dalits, now moving towards the centre, is Chandra's observation. The dignas also enclosed and marked narrative spaces bringing together diverse instances on the same page as suggested by Varughese. Digna patterns could also be wavy not necessarily straight and often running diagonally on the pages.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Discuss the transformations in Gond art.

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- 2) Discuss the digna as integral to the narrative of *Bhimayana*.

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1.5 AN OVERVIEW OF *BHIMAYANA*: *EXPERIENCES OF UNTOUCHABILITY*

Let us now look at *Bhimayana: Experiences of Untouchability* as a compilation of some key events in the life of Dr B R Ambedkar. The book aims to depict and simultaneously interrogate the persistent nature of caste in Indian society, and

written from that perspective, the story does not remain that of an individual's or Ambedkar's alone but starts representing the entire community. The Foreword written by **John Berger** (a leading art critic, the author of the indispensable book *Ways of Seeing*) offers an insight into the need for storytelling through the perspective of the oppressed castes and classes, the need to document history not as a record of the privileged but the constant struggle for survival of the downtrodden.

As Nandini Chandra observes, "It's like a *katha*, a story telling session." She also observes that there are simultaneously two contrasting styles of storytelling, "...one the mythic Gondi style which enacts the stories, the other the reportage which tells it..." It is the combination of both that one must be attentive to. In the next section we shall look at the three main sections of the graphic novel.

1.5.1 One Day: Discussing Caste

The book opens with a short prelude titled "One Day..." It sets the tone of the narrative as a conversation between two individuals waiting at a bus stop, in an Indian city. The time is mentioned as "a day in the recent past" (11). The unspecific time and location is indicative of commonplace discussions about caste in a contemporary urban setup. These two characters also indicate "India's English speaking youth" says Nayar, who are also familiar with the format of graphic books.

Ambedkar's life is then narrated, through the story of the Mahar community, representing how dalits were forced to live across India. Eleanor Zelliot states that "The traditional role of the Mahar caste was that of village servants. Every village, almost without exception, in the Marathi-speaking area of west central India, had its *maharwada* (Mahar quarters). Mahars had no special skill or craft, but performed necessary duties for the village as watchmen, wall-menders, street-sweepers, removers of cattle carcasses, caretakers of the burning ground, servants of any passing government official." Dalits across the country were forced to perform similar caste based tasks and face discrimination and exploitation. Following the Prelude is the first segment titled "Water" which we shall look at next.

1.5.2 Water

The first segment titled "Water", examines the plight of dalits who are denied access to common water sources. The notion of pollution is often invoked to justify such injustice, as water a cleansing agent is considered to be polluted if touched by dalits. The first incident represented is that of 1901, when ten year old Ambedkar is compelled to sit away from his classmates in school, and is not given drinking water by the school clerk/ peon. The child Bhim is depicted at the corners of all the four panels (pg. 20-21), speaking from the margins, a place accorded to him due to his belonging to a certain caste. A thirsty Bhim is represented by fish to emphasise the requirement of water and also its absence (pg. 19-21). The idealised image of the teacher is demolished as he laments that the British government have allowed untouchables into schools without taking into account traditional beliefs. This incident also underlines that in pursuit of education, dalits have to constantly face discrimination.

There is an interjection in the narrative where the two people waiting at the bus stand reappear. One arguing that such events happened hundred of years ago, to which the other responds by narrating the *Mahad Satyagraha*.

Mahad was a part of the Bombay province then and is now a city in the Raigadh district in the north Konkan region of Maharashtra. On 19th March 1927, Ambedkar decided that the mahars had to march towards Chowdar Tank, to claim their right to accessing water. As the leaders drank water from the tank there it was rumoured that they would now enter the Veereshwar temple. A riot broke out in which several dalits were attacked and injured by caste Hindus. A police investigation was conducted and five caste Hindus were sentenced to imprisonment for four months, and a purification rite was performed at Chowdar Tank. On 25th December 1927, the *Manusmriti* was publicly burned to signal a rejection of traditional tenets prescribed for the Shudras/ Untouchables/ Dalits. Ambedkar filed a case to the right to water of the Chowdar Tank and it was decided in his favour by the Bombay High Court in 1937.

This event is culturally evoked and celebrated in Dalit movements and is depicted through images of Ambedkar's inspirational words as water sprinklers quenching the thirst of masses suppressed for centuries. Fish images are used abundantly; the tank is encircled by a fish while the water is accessed by hands. In the central image a hand holds the water body with a fish swimming inside it (pg. 48-49 & 54). The French Revolution (1789-99) is referred to as a precedent for challenging feudalistic structures. The facing page (pg 55), carries a news article of April 2008, a grim reminder of contemporary reality, firmly juxtaposing *Mahad Satyagraha* with continuing discriminations and vengeful violence by caste Hindus. The illustration is of the Chakwara village incident, near Jaipur where the Bairwas were punished with social boycott for defying tradition and using the local pond. The narrative again returns to the two people waiting at the bus stop, underlining the persistence of caste in contemporary India. Let us now look at Section II of the *Bhimayana*.

1.5.3 Shelter

The idea of home is explored in the next segment titled "Shelter", wherein, the home signifies the special space where one is accepted. It is 1918 and Ambedkar is headed to Baroda on a train from Bombay, to serve as a probationer in the Accountant General's office. Remember Ambedkar has just returned from his studies abroad, through the conversation with fellow passengers, he is reminded that in India caste discrimination continues. It is depicted as a vicious circle trapping individuals without a way out (pg. 61). The constant concern on his mind is a place to stay as hotels allowed only upper caste members and staying with friends was not an option as friendship across castes was again problematic. The train journey is depicted in curved loops also indicative of the train of thoughts running through Ambedkar's head as he mulls over the non availability of accommodation (pg. 62-63).

Ambedkar finds an old Parsi inn which he believes would give him room, as their religion does not practice caste and untouchability. When he identifies himself as a Hindu, he is told to vacate the room as the inn was meant only for Parsis. Since there were no customers, they arrived at a compromise that Ambedkar will provide a Parsi name for the register. In office, files are thrown at him, not handed over or placed at his desk. The desolation he feels both at the

inn and office are depicted as he feels like an ox forced to turn the wheels of the oil-press (pg. 66). Meanwhile all his attempts at writing to officers to seek accommodation are futile. Eventually, he is confronted by a group of stick wielding Parsis threatening to beat him up for ‘polluting’ the inn. He is forced to leave the inn. His Hindu and Christian friends too do not offer him shelter and their responses are depicted as sharp arrows aimed at Ambedkar (pg. 69). The narrative returns to the two individuals discussing a newspaper report of 2008 when, three Dalit siblings in Delhi were badly beaten up by the landlord and his family. In the next subsection we shall take up for study Section III entitled Travel.

1.5.4 Travel

This section deals with how caste can become a hurdle while travelling as a 43 year old Ambedkar is travelling in a bus with political workers in 1934. He reminisces about an incident in 1929, when he visited Chalis gaon, boarded a tonga (a horse/ oxen driven cart), and met with an accident. The narrative now turns to the Ambedkar-Gandhi debate. It is argued that while Gandhi’s foremost priority was to fight for freedom from the British, Ambedkar urged for transforming Hindu society. They disagreed on the need for separate electorates. The facing panels (pg. 90-91) depict the polarity of their stances with the preamble of the Constitution of India in the middle. Ambedkar we must remember was the Chair of the drafting committee of the constitution and Gandhi wrote a letter to the British officials, expressing his belief that the untouchables could not judge their concerns well because of a lack of ‘political consciousness’ and the fact that they ‘not well organized’ (pg. 91). On the same panel it is mentioned that Ambedkar was India’s first Law minister and that he strove hard to give equal rights to women through the Hindu Code Bill. Ambedkar was a true visionary, and his well known and significant statements are arranged as branches of a tree, a crucial life giving force (pg. 92). These statements are enclosed in an open book figure, indicating the prolific works of Ambedkar. The multiple mouths and branches also signify the message carried to the masses that will continue to be transmitted.

Ambedkar studied Buddhism and wrote *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, arguing that Buddha had a social message. In his writings on ‘Conversion’, he says that untouchability was a Hindu practice and conversion could help dalits gain dignity. His conversion is depicted as the Buddha surrounded by living beings; humans, animals and birds; all as equals (pg. 93). The two individuals having completed their discussion, bid adieu to each other, the one who was previously ignorant of caste, now professes his respect for Ambedkar and concludes with ‘Jai Bhim!’

1.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we examined the sufferings and struggles of Ambedkar, located it in contemporary times, examined the graphic narrative, appreciated Gond art and looked at some of the most crucial themes touched upon in the Graphic Novel - access to water, shelter and travel. Do read the *Bhimayana* before you move further, it will enhance your understanding.

1.7 QUESTIONS

- 1) What is the significance of dividing the book into three themes of basic necessities?
- 2) How has *Bhimayana* refashioned the medium of the graphic narrative?
- 3) Discuss the significance of the short prelude 'One Day'
- 4) How does water work as a theme in *Bhimayana*?
- 5) Discuss the importance of the Mahad Satyagraha.
- 6) The ordeal at Baroda exposes multiple layers of caste discrimination. Discuss.
- 7) Travelling is treated literally and metaphorically in this segment. Discuss.

1.8 HINTS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Read section 1.1 and then answer in your own words
- 2) Read section 1.2 and then answer in your own words

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Read section 1.3 and then answer in your own words
- 2) Read section 1.3.1 and then answer in your own words
- 3) Read section 1.3.2 and then answer in your own words

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Read section 1.4 and then answer in your own words
- 2) Read section 1.4.1 and then answer in your own words

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UNIT 2 GRAPHIC NARRATIVES: ANALYSING VYAM'S *BHIMAYANA*

Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Defining the Category
- 2.3 Introduction to the *Bhimayana*
- 2.4 Knowing the 'Hero' of the *Bhimayana*
- 2.5 A note on the structure of *Bhimayana*
- 2.6 Major Themes: Reading between the Lines
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 - 2.6.3 *Bhimayana* – A Pun on 'Ramayana'
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- 2.8 Questions
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- 2.10 Glossary
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2.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit aims to introduce the learners to the engaging and exciting world of Graphic and Visual Narratives. It begins by tracing the beginnings of the graphic narrative form of the *avante-garde* comics written during the 1980s. Later, it critically engages with Durgabai Vyam and Subhash Vyam's illustrative book *Bhimayana: Experiences of Untouchability* which depicts the life-story of Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar in a graphic manner by making use of the tribal *Pardhan Gond* Art form. Let us begin by tracing the history of graphic narratives next.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

It was not very long ago that *Diamond Comics*, *Raj Comics*, *Amar Chitra Katha*, *Nandan*, *Champak*, were a rage amongst teenagers growing up in India. *Chacha Chaudhary*, *Doga*, *Nagraj* and several others still continue to excite the imagination of young adults. The same is true of the fascinating world of superheroes brought alive by *Marvel Comics*. Despite the fascination here in India and across the globe, comic books were largely seen with contempt citing their corrupting influence over young minds; a source of cheap entertainment; a distraction away from the 'serious business' of education; not having that artistic finesse, etc. There have been lengthy debates on the literary canon comprising 'high art' and comics being unworthy of that tag. The subject matter of comics

was believed to be inapt for serious issues demanding academic attention. It was largely restricted to generate humor as it catered to only a specific age group.

There came a paradigmatic shift in these debates around comics as a creative art form with the publication of **Art Spiegelman's** *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* in 1986. Here, the American cartoonist chose the graphic novel form to narrate the traumatic experiences of his parents who were Polish Jews that survived the concentration camp at Auschwitz. As a disturbing and extremely moving piece of art, the text allegorically depicts Jews as Mice and Nazis as menacing cats to represent the brutal lived realities of the Holocaust. The novel went on to receive the prestigious Pulitzer Prize in 1992. This was the first time that a graphic text, written in a comic way, was considered for a literary award. The critical acclaim that followed heralded the transition of comics from a 'low art' medium to 'high art' graphic narrative. Along with Spiegelman, **Gary Panter** and **Jerry Moriarty** contributed towards *avant-garde* comic/graphic/visual writings during the 1980s where they explored complex subjects in experimental 'form'. Let us look at the graphic narrative in some detail next.

2.2 DEFINING THE CATEGORY

In this section we will look at how the graphic narrative came into being, evolving from the humble and low brow comic to its present stature. The literary category of 'Popular Fiction' today has witnessed a considerable rise in the popularity of graphic and visual modes of narrativisation. The comics, sequential art, motion picture, pictorial narrative, illustration, animation – all of these would, fall under its ambit. Given the wide variety of these creative categories and their overlapping nature, it is difficult to arrive at a specific definition of graphic and visual narratives. Loosely, these can be defined as the ones that combine the text, graphics, visuals, pictures, illustrations etc. to convey the story. A special issue on Graphic Narratives by *Modern Fiction Studies* writes: "...graphic narrative offers an intricately layered narrative language – the language of comics – that comprises the verbal, the visual and the way these two representational modes interact on a page."

One point of criticism that has bothered graphic novelists for a long time is that they rely heavily upon the visual elements to convey their 'stories'. **K Strong Hansen** undercuts this negative criticism by focusing upon the range and complexity of graphic narratives. She further argues: "Imagery and drawings are not inherently less valuable than the verbal, literary art. In fact, images often convey a richness and depth of ideas that require interpretation and high level critical thinking, analysis and evaluation skills." Having said that by way of defining the graphic novel let us begin with the text *Bhimayana*. Of course, we have looked at it in some detail in Unit I.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Enlist any three comic books you read while growing up? What was the motive behind reading those books?

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2.3 INTRODUCTION TO THE *BHIMAYANA*

Published in 2011, *Bhimayana: Experiences of Untouchability* is based on the lived experiences of Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar. The text uses a hybrid medium wherein it uses both the text as well as images in order to convey the life story of Ambedkar. The illustrations are done in the folk idiom of Gond art by Durgabai Vyam and Subhash Vyam. The storyline, written by Srividya Natrajan and S Anand, is loosely modeled upon the *Autobiographical Notes* of Ambedkar. The same is available in Vasant Moon's *Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches* under the heading 'Waiting for a Visa'. *Bhimayana* creates a counter-narrative against Brahminism by focusing upon the actions/attitudes of upper castes towards the subjugated castes. Images are given equal space and importance which helps the book to subvert the hegemony of the written word. The text is divided into three parts: water, shelter, travel. Through these three sections, the book tries to present a historiography of the life and times of Ambedkar as well as the struggles of the Dalit community through these times. In doing so, it borrows heavily from the novelistic form of narration. Nandini Chandra notes: "while the publishers shy away from calling it a graphic novel and stick to the more universal category *graphic book*, the overarching frame in which it is slotted, marketed and reviewed are that of *Graphic Novel*."

Bhimayana is a new age graphic book that defies the conventional codes of graphic narratives. The book is radical both in its content as well as the form. One of the major aims of the book is to raise awareness about the continuity of Dalit struggle in contemporary times by creating a visual literacy around the issue. In a radical departure from western models of sequential art, *Bhimayana* uses an ancient tribal folk art form to narrate an ages' old narrative of oppression. The telling symbolism of the images, the structure and placement of the text, the colours, and beautiful demarcation through *digna* patterns – all come together to create this radical experiment in the graphic narrative form which challenges hegemony in terms of form, content, literary models and purpose. The next section will deal with the hero of the *Bhimayana*.

2.4 KNOWING THE 'HERO' OF THE *BHIMAYANA*

In popular imagination and conventional history books, Dr Ambedkar is largely known as the Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee. As you may already be aware, having read it in the previous unit, Ambedkar was a prolific student and a politician of repute. He was born on April 14, 1891 in a Mahar family of Mhow (part of Central Provinces) in western India. After graduating from University of Mumbai, he went for higher studies to Columbia University and London School of Economics. He also served as the first Minister of Law and Justice of Independent India from August 1945 to September 1951. Most of the statues of Ambedkar represent him as the wearing a suit and tie, big glasses and holding a book. This image while emphasising one aspect of his personality, fails to depict his attachment and engagement with the Dalit community; for many of whom wearing such an attire or having access to higher education remains a distant dream even today.

While testifying to the public imagination of him being urban/educated/elite, who, played a crucial role in laying the foundation of modern, democratic and a

'just' India, one must also remember that he played an equally important role in Dalit awakening against centuries' old caste based oppression. He remained a lifelong crusader of affirmative action for the socially marginalised communities. This definitely brought him at loggerheads with the government many a times. In 1924, he founded the *Bahishkrit Hitkarini Sabha* with an aim to 'Educate, Agitate, Organise' the depressed classes.

India has come a long way in granting constitutional rights to all the citizens irrespective of their caste and creed. The *Dalit Pathers* movement of the 1970s further emboldened the Dalits to fight for their right to dignified life. Despite rigorous efforts, the atrocities against Dalits have not stopped. Constitutional rights have not really changed the attitude of the upper castes towards the people of the "lower castes". It is important to underscore that caste is not a thing of the past. Repeated hate crimes like rape, murder, parading naked, etc against the oppressed classes which floods the newspapers on a daily basis, are a testimony to the fact that caste is a living force in Indian culture and politics. Given the manner in which caste polarisation occurs during elections, one can conclude that caste is also a form of power and privilege to some and also a reason for large scale socio-economic marginalisation for several others.

It is in this context that *Bhimayana* appears to be radical in its approach. Dr Ambedkar as the protagonist of *Bhimayana* does not borrow the features of superheroes to launch a crusade against caste based discrimination. Rather, he uses his position to depict the struggles of the Dalit community. Even though the structure of *Bhimayana* is largely modeled on Ambedkar's *Autobiographical Notes*, it is as much a memoir of the community whose struggles have only changed shape over a period of time. Pramod K Nayar writes that the life story of Ambedkar "was constantly yoked to contemporary India by carefully noting the continuities of caste based oppression and anti Dalit violence".

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Write a short note on the contribution of Dr Ambedkar towards the uplift of the depressed classes?

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- 2) Do you think that the issue of caste has contemporary relevance? Why/ Why not?

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2.5 A NOTE ON THE STRUCTURE OF *BHIMAYANA*

In this section, we shall examine the manner in which the graphic narrative *Bhimayana* is structured. The text opens by showcasing any ‘one day in recent past’ where two people are sitting at a bus stop and discussing the relevance of caste based reservation in education and employment opportunities. The contemporary relevance of the text comes from this image which depicts the varying attitudes of the modern generation towards affirmative action for subjugated communities. The page (11) which is brought alive by merely three dialogues but many images depicting ‘modern times’ serves as the framing device of the text. There is a constant back and forth movement in time as the knowledge production around the complex dialectics of anti-caste ideology takes place through questions and answers between these two individuals. The two individuals finally arrive at an understanding on the caste struggle towards the end, which is, as much an understanding meant for the readers as for the individuals in question. In doing so, the text aims to represent a prejudice-free depiction of the caste based struggle from the past to the present times. The cut-outs from the newspapers that talk of modern day dehumanisation of Dalit life also serve the same purpose which is to underscore the contemporary relevance of *Bhimayana*.

The first part is titled *Water* and narrates the story of young Bhim’s first experiences of caste based discrimination. The segregation from the classmates, the restrictions on accessing potable water, lack of access to the barber – all depict the attitude of the larger community towards the untouchables. The narrative also focuses upon the sub-human existence of Dalit life where animals have better rights than them. Despite being one of the ‘lucky few’ as his father was a *subedar* in the British Army, Bhim is fairly agitated to notice the discrimination he suffers at school and in society. On his visit to Satara, not even a single cart-man agrees to give a ride to a *mahar* even if the *mahar* was willing to pay double the fare. The full reality of caste discrimination becomes evident to Bhim when he undertakes that journey to Satara and learns it the hard way by undergoing hardships. The text also makes it a point to note that these hardships are not a thing of the past. It depicts the newspaper cuttings from 2008 in Satara where a dalit man was killed for planning to dig a personal well in his compound. The present day conversation around the *Mahad Satyagraha* of 1923 further emphasises the fact that, a community had to historically challenge the established structures of society for access to something as elemental and basic as water.

Section Two of the book titled *Shelter* opens with an image of an adult Ambedkar wearing a suit and glasses symbolising his encounter with western education and cultural values. While away at Columbia, he had almost forgotten the experience of untouchability. When he boards a train to Baroda in 1917 to join a government job, he is immediately reminded of his position in the social structure, in a conversation with a fellow brahmin passenger. Apparently, he goes to Baroda to join as a Probationer in the Accountant General’s Office but cannot find a place to stay in Baroda. He cannot find shelter anywhere in Baroda despite repeated efforts. He is forcibly evicted from his temporary stay at a Parsi Inn by an armed mob of Parsis. None of his friends allow him to stay at his place citing his lower caste status. Helplessly, he decides to return to Bombay on the next train. With no place to go, he decides to spend the remaining duration of five

hours in the Kamathi Baug public garden. This series of events comes with a realisation that an untouchable remains untouchable not just for an upper caste Hindu but also for Parsis, Christians and Muslims. The framed narrative also refutes a mainstream claim that caste exists only in remote parts of the country. Ambedkar was refused a shelter in the city of Baroda in spite of his academic credentials. The situation in contemporary Indian cities is hardly any different where one can still find similar incidents of forcible eviction, caste based slurs, public beating, etc. on almost an everyday basis.

The third book *Travel* is located in Aurangabad, in 1934. This was the time when Ambedkar was already recognised as an influential leader of the depressed classes. He was closely attached to the cause of Dalit communities and worked rigorously for the socio-political awakening of this section of society. Here, the text talks about the rigid structure of *chaturvarnashrama* within the Hindu fold where a dalit is looked down upon even by the one doing menial jobs like driving a tonga. Even the doctors refuse to touch/treat the body of a dalit patient fearing that the touch might pollute their sense of purity. The framed narrative then comes back to the major debates around the contribution of Gandhi and Ambedkar towards establishing the principles of equality in society. The text foregrounds that Ambedkar remained a lifelong advocate of equality for all sections, to make them independent and be able to fight for their own rights. Gandhi on the other hand was more concerned with the freedom struggle. While the former hoped for complete annihilation of the caste system so as to bring all the citizens at par, the latter promoted only cosmetic changes to the caste system so that untouchables could also be accommodated within the fourfold structure of Hindu caste system. Tired of the regressive caste system within Hinduism, he eventually embraced Buddhism in 1956.

The fourth section of the book decodes and simplifies the *Art of Bhimayana* for the readers. It narrates the story of the gradual development of *Pardhan Gond* art from being a decorative art used during festivities to the one making to a mainstream graphic book in 2011. The next section will look at some of the major themes in *Bhimayana*. If you recall we mentioned in an earlier course that a novel/ a play/ any text for that matter has a main idea/ theme and several other ideas/ themes that hold the novel together and add to the richness of the text along with fitting into the overall structure of the text.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) What is *Chaturvarnashrama* in Hinduism?

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- 2) Explain the significance of the framed narrative in the *Bhimayana*?

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- 3) What purpose do the excerpts from newspapers serve in the text?

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2.6 MAJOR THEMES: READING BETWEEN THE LINES

Bhimayana is considered to be one of the most important graphic texts of contemporary popular fiction. While the tools of analysing the text are largely borrowed from the conventions of graphic writing, *Bhimayana* undercuts the very same conventions despite falling under the broad category of the Graphic Narrative. This section is further divided into three subsections, with each subsection dealing with a specific theme in the graphic narrative – the *Bhimayana*. The *Bhimayana* also lends very well to the idea of subverting the codes of graphic narratives. Let us look at that first.

2.6.1 Subversion of the Conventional Codes of Graphic Narratives

Comic book writing involves the usage of rectangular framing to separate one line of thought from another. The illustrators of *Bhimayana* found this frame to be stifling for the characters. They wanted to create ‘*khulla*’/‘open’ art where all the characters could breathe easily. Instead, they chose *digna* patterns to create boundaries. The narrative is not unilinear in approach. It goes back and forth in time constantly. Further, the same characters may not appear identical at all times. At times it is difficult to even distinguish one character from the other. The text is referential in nature which functions in both a connotative as well as a denotative manner. The meaning does not really emerge only through the characters but takes shape in accordance to the placement of humans, birds, trains, buses, sky, *lathi*, and even pointed fingers or staring eyes. All these elements come together to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of Dalit existence, their challenges and their resolve to fight back. The next subsection will look at what is now called alternate historiography.

2.6.2 Alternate Historiography

Through references to certain political events of modern Indian history, the text aims to focus upon alternate histories which seem to fill in the gaps between mainstream historical narratives about the caste struggle and the narratives of and by the lower castes. What gets published and what is deliberately left out in history books is a matter of power politics. The 'authenticity' of this History is also mediated by vested interests of successive ruling regimes. While the *Dandi March* against the salt rule is emphasised in modern political history, the *Mahad Satyagraha* is left out of the larger discourses around the freedom struggle. The protest in which 3000 dalits were led by Ambedkar to drink from the Chadavar Tank came to be known as the "Declaration of Independence" in the Dalit Movement. However, the event which aimed to bring dalits on equal footing with their upper caste counterparts is conspicuously missing from mainstream history. Similarly, when Dalits were promised separate electorates by the then British Prime Minister **Ramsay McDonald**, Gandhi strongly opposed the idea citing that this measure would further disintegrate Hindu society. While mainstream history tends to either skip this piece of information or dilutes its impact upon the lower classes, *Bhimayana* foregrounds that the *Poona Pact* of 1932 was actually a betrayal of Dalits' struggle for an autonomous and independent voice of their own. Gandhi went on a fast unto death, to prevent the granting of a separate electorate to the Dalits. Due to this arm-twisting, Ambedkar was forced to sign the *Poona Pact* which settled for electorates for Dalits within the seats meant for the Hindus. Let us quickly look at the third subsection that deals with how the word *Bhimayana* is a pun on the word *Ramayana*, once again a subversion of sorts.

2.6.3 *Bhimayana* – A Pun on 'Ramayana'

The title *Bhimayana* is a pun on the epic narrative '*Ramayana*'. The way the *Ramayana* talks of the journey of Rama through various stages of his life overcoming hardships on the way, *Bhimayana* also narrates the life story of a young boy - Bhim who transcends his social-historical reality and goes on to acquire the status of the quintessential 'hero' of Dalits for ages to come. The text uses the overarching frame of the journey motif used in epics but it does not allow the narrative to fall into an epic-like structure in the conventional sense. Rather, it showcases an alternative story of heroism via subversive techniques of storytelling. While the *Ramayana* speaks of the coming of age story of Rama and depicts the struggles of an upper class Prince to establish his kingdom after fighting the enemies, the *Bhimayana* appears to present a completely contrasting image. The lofty style of epic proportions is abandoned and an informal conversational tone becomes the narrative strategy in *Bhimayana*. The traditional hero is replaced by a young boy of the Mahar community and the text chooses to depict the 'heroic' journey of Dr Ambedkar and his struggles in fighting for basic amenities. *Bhimayana*, in that sense, is not merely a story about *Bhim/Ambedkar* but also symbolises the journey of an entire community and their struggle through the ages against caste based atrocities.

Check Your Progress 4

- 1) Write a short note on the Poona Pact of 1932.

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- 2) Enlist any five characteristics of an Epic.

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- 3) Discuss the dissimilarities between the Ramayana and the Bhimayana with relevant examples.

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2.6.4 *Pardhan Gonds and their Folk Art*

In this section we shall take a quick look at *Gond* art and see how it has been utilised in the *Bhimayana*. Questions that arise are is *Gond* art just used to give a different effect to the graphic narrative or does it serve another purpose? The *Gonds* are a tribal community largely found in central India. They form the largest *adivasi* community in India with widespread presence in Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Maharastra, Orissa and Andhra Pradesh. *Pardhan Gonds* are a sub-part of the larger *Gond* community and have traditionally served as the ‘keepers of the cultural heritage’ of their clan. The origins of their traditional folk art are rooted in oral narratives transmitted through songs and storytelling. This conventional way of living suffered a major setback when the patronage of these artists declined over a period of time. As a survival strategy, they turned to a visual mode of storytelling. They began by painting *digna* patterns on the mud walls of their houses for decorative purposes. Coloured mud of different kinds was used to convey the story through ample use of motifs. Gradually, around the early 1980s their talent came to the limelight with the active support of artist **Jagdish Swaminathan** who promoted the traditional artists as professional ones. With this, canvas and acrylic/fabric colors were also brought to use in order to depict the aesthetics of tribal *gond* art.

Pardhan Gond art is pregnant with rich symbolism where meanings are not static. Often, the art is referential in nature where the collective meaning of a given panel comes from the minute details which might go unnoticed in the first reading. The paintings showcase beautifully the peaceful co-existence of living and non-living forms. Humans do not necessarily form the larger than life characters in their scheme of things.

In *Bhimayana*, the illustrators have avoided the staple boxed narratives of comic writing. They have allowed for a breathing space for all the characters. There are no gutters to demarcate one line of thought from another. Rather, one image seamlessly merges into another. *Digna* patterns are used effectively to demarcate certain sections if needed. Often a story begins in the present, refers to the past and comes back to the present on the same page; just like the framed narrative. There is an associated meaning with every single image. Even the strategy of representing characters keeps on shifting throughout the course of the text. For example, to depict thirsty Bhim, the image of a fish is attached to his persona (pg 19). As his thirst increases, the image of fish becomes bigger (pg 21). While waiting for his train in Kamathi Baug, Ambedkar himself turns into a park. In fact, there is no effort to make the hero stand out in the crowded panel. He looks almost similar to other members of his community. This 'de-iconising' of the hero is a step forward than the didactic approach used in the *Amar Chitra Katha* series that showcased a chronological depiction of Ambedkar's struggles right from his younger days to his eventual rise as the father of the Indian Constitution. *Bhimayana*, on the other hand, narrates the collective struggle of the community in which one's caste identity overshadows his personal achievements. There are repeated references to Ambedkar's realisation of his own insignificance in front of the diabolic caste structure. As a child, he is pained to see that animals have better rights than dalits.

In one particular panel, the entire page is filled with the large colourful images of animals having access to water and being groomed by human. Ambedkar's minor presence in the corner of this panel in black and white speaks volume about the sub-human existence meted out to untouchables (pg 23). The opening page of Book two depicts a similar story where a learned Ambedkar returns to India carrying the 'heavy weight' of his western education. The panel is divided between two major images – water at the top and shelter like image at the bottom. Ambedkar is actually stuck between the two. Despite his education, he remains caught between the struggle for water and shelter (pg 59). His numerous degrees have helped little in changing the attitudes of upper caste people towards him. He tries hard but fails to find a shelter for himself in Baroda. Thereby, begins a long struggle for equality that culminates with the drafting of the constitution where provisions for equality were inserted for all citizens of the nation and untouchability was abolished by law. The text goes on to depict these struggles and achievements through various panels but a lot needs to be done even today because the constitutional provisions have not been able to change the mindset. In 2006, a village near Nagpur witnessed a gruesome incident in which a mother and a daughter were raped, paraded naked and subsequently killed by an upper caste mob. Incidents like Khairlanji (Nagpur) are a living reminder that little has changed in modern India when it comes to caste based atrocities. S Anand rightly argues in *Bhimayana*: "Each time you view a page in this book, you will discover new ways of seeing, new meanings, new pleasures, fresh insights. (102)"

The text also presents a brilliant example of metonymic representation. Different viewpoints are suggested by multiple hands pointing in the same direction (pg 20); an angry mob is shown by attaching heads and shoes to axes and *lathis*. The existence of different animals, birds, and insects is not merely for the sake of filling gaps. They are also active participants in the storytelling. Even non-living entities have been given a humane dimension by making serpentine structures, railway tracks, showcasing a tear-shedding earthmover, pained to see the mob lynching a Dalit. There is no linear sense of time. The past and the present exist in a continuum both in terms of the narration as well as the narrative strategy. Talking about this 'mytho-epic universe' of *Bhimayana*, Nandini Chandra writes: "This kind of animistic excess and fluidity of morphing forms tells us something about the nature of imagination in Gondi artwork, in contrast to the void fixated imagination defying Vedic cosmos. (22)" Let us look at the significance of the bubble motif that is to be found in the narrative in the section.

Check Your Progress 5

- 1) Write a short note on the Gond Tribes.

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- 2) What do you understand by Motif? Comment on water as a motif in *Bhimayana*.

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2.6.5 Significance of the Bubble Motif

Here, we shall examine the significance of the bubble motif and see how or what it does in the graphic narrative- *Bhimayana*. There are repeated occurrences of speech bubbles throughout the text. The bird speech bubble signifies the voice of the weak and the oppressed. These people are generally the victims of caste based discrimination and often fail to raise their voice against the victimisers. Contrary to these, are the scorpion shaped bubbles venomous both in appearance as well as content. These scorpion shaped bubbles represent the harsh, slur-filled, abusive attitude of the upper caste/upper class people towards the untouchables. The thought bubbles merely reflect the musings of the mind without giving details to the active listeners. Given the limited agency of Dalits in expressing their viewpoints, the thought bubbles allow the reader to see the state of mind of the affected party. Thus, we see how the bubbles are used to substantiate a point of view or to get a message across in the graphic narrative. Colours used by the

Gond artists too have a cultural significance. We shall look at this aspect briefly in the next section.

2.6.6 The Symbolism of Colours

Colors have a major significance in *Gondi* folk art. Traditionally, *Pardhan Gonds* made use of seasonally coloured soil to decorate the walls through beautiful *digna* patterns. *Bhimayana* also makes creative use of colours in the illustrations. Every single image carries multiple layers of meaning where colours also help to further emphasise the impact of the image. They serve different purposes at different times. In a text like *Bhimayana*, the background carries as much significance as the foreground itself. At times, colour codes are used to separate these two. They also act as segregating device between two distinct ideas/events/incidents. For instance, page 23 depicts animals and the background is in bold colours while human are painted in a dull black and white. This signifies the degradation of dalit life, and the depiction indicates that dalits are treated even worse than animals/ beasts.

The text makes use of vibrant colours like orange, green, yellow, and blue in different parts. The text boxes painted in yellow depict the speeches/views of Ambedkar while those in dark orange depict the views of Gandhi. The one in the mint green shade contain the excerpts from the Indian constitution (Pg 90-91). The vibrant blue colour is majorly used to depict water but it symbolises freshness, positivity and energy. Do you think the colours could suggest/ stand for other issues as well?

2.7 LET US SUM UP

The roots of caste based discrimination are deep seated in India and it exists as a continuum from the ancient past to the present, and contemporary times. The framed narrative of *Bhimayana* serves as a brilliant reminder for the audience to, visualise that even though they are witnessing incidents from the past (incidents of oppression faced by the Dalit community in general and Dr Ambedkar in particular), the present - day experiences of Dalits are strikingly similar. A counter narrative against upper caste hegemony, *Bhimayana* not only delineates the trajectory of historical trauma but also develops an efficient vocabulary of counter – abuse. The double standards and hypocrisy of the upper castes is laid bare by repeated references to incidents of the rape of dalit women.

There is a complete disregard of their own heightened notions of ‘purity and pollution’ when it comes to raping these women belonging to the lower castes. While the hand pump and the earth mower are shown to be humane, there is ‘de-humanisation’ of the angry upper caste mob whose bodies are replaced by the sticks. The choice of graphic medium allows for a wider reach given a sense of excitement associated with graphic narratives. Moreover, it is a powerful medium as it triggers associations. It allows the reader to see multiple histories of oppression and understand their contemporary relevance.

The unit focused upon the rise of the Graphic Narratives as a serious category of literature. It critically engaged with Srividya Natarajan's *Bhimayana* while paying attention to major themes. It further talked about the creative brilliance of the text in using an ancient art form - *gondi* to depict a centuries' old history of

oppression. While the tools are traditional, the technique of narrativisation is brand new which renders the story into a graphic format to raise awareness about India's hidden apartheid at a local as well as a global level via visual literacy.

2.8 QUESTIONS

- 1) What makes Bhimayana an instance of Popular Literature? Explain with the help of relevant examples?
- 2) What is an allegory? Give any two examples from the text Bhimayana.
- 3) Explain the significance of the Mahad Satyagraha.

2.9 HINTS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Any three comics and why you read them will be your answer.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Read section 2.4 carefully and answer in your own words.
- 2) Read section 2.4 carefully and answer in your own words.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Read section 2.5 carefully and answer in your own words.
- 2) Read section 2.5 carefully and answer in your own words.
- 3) Read section 2.5 carefully and answer in your own words.

Check Your Progress 4

- 1) Read section 2.6.2 carefully and answer in your own words.
- 2) Read section 2.6.3 carefully as well as revisit BEGC-101 {102. and answer in your own words.
- 3) Read section 2.6.3 carefully and answer in your own words.

Check Your Progress 5

- 1) Read section 2.6.4 carefully and answer in your own words.
- 2) Refer to the Glossary, section 2.5, and section 2.7 and answer in your own words.

2.10 GLOSSARY

Alternate Historiography : Refers to fiction that is based largely on history and that which explores what might have happened if certain historical events, figures, etc., had been different; a history that is told from an unusual or unorthodox perspective. Historiography can very simply be defined as the history of history; or as the study of how history was written, by whom, and why it was recorded as such. Moreover, it is a look at the:

ifs, and hows, of how historical events have been reinterpreted by historians over time and why. Historiography is important for a wide range of reasons. It helps us understand why historical events have been interpreted so differently over time. In other words, historiography helps us examine not only history itself, but also the broader, overlying characteristics that shape the recording of history itself. For instance, did a new power come to being and did its historians alter the loser's history for generations? Or maybe economic issues caused historians to look at a historical event through a different lens. Just as critically, historiography lets us study history with a critical eye. It helps us understand what biases may have shaped the historical record. It ensures we don't blindly trust what we read from historians 10, 100, and 1,000 years ago. Simultaneously, it also ensures that we do not fall victim to the same mistakes made by some previous historians. By extension historiography lets us dig for, and get to, the factual history behind the historical myth, so to speak. It gives us a way to re-interpret the biases of a historian's perspective in a more equitable manner. So long as we remain unbiased in the process, of course. Ultimately, historiography gives us an appreciation of how factors that shape and alter the recording of history shape and alter our interpretation of it as a result.

Allegory : An allegory is a representation of an abstract or a spiritual meaning conveyed through a comparison of a concrete or material form; it may also be described as the figurative treatment of one subject under the guise of another.

Auschwitz : Auschwitz, is also known as Auschwitz-Birkenau, and was the largest Nazi concentration and death camp that was opened in 1940. Auschwitz began as a detention center for political prisoners and is located in southern Poland. It was to quickly evolve into a network of camps where Jewish people and other perceived enemies of the Nazi state were killed, often in gas chambers, or used as slave labour. Josef Mengele (1911-79) also conducted some of the most barbaric medical experiments on the prisoners there. During World War II (1939-45), more than 1 million people, lost their lives at Auschwitz. In January 1945, when it was obvious that the Soviet army was going to

overrun Auschwitz, the Nazi officials abandoned the camp and sent around 60,000 prisoners on a forced march to other locations. Eventually when the Soviets entered Auschwitz, they found thousands of emaciated detainees and piles of corpses left behind.

Avante Garde

- : Avante Garde is a concept that may be explained with a movement / phase that occurred in the sphere of the arts. The painters, writers, musicians, and other artists whose ideas, styles, and methods were very original or modern in comparison to the period in which they live, or the work of these artists is referred to as avantgarde.

Brahmanism

- : Brahmanism is an ancient Indian religious tradition that emerged from the Vedic religion. Brahmanism emphasised the rites performed by, and the status of, the Brahman, or the priestly class.

Concentration camp

- : A Concentration camp is described by Britannica.com as an internment centre for political prisoners and members of national or minority groups who are confined for reasons of state security, exploitation, or punishment, usually by executive decree or military order. People are grouped in camps such as this based more on ethnic or political affiliation sans benefit either of indictment or fair trial.

Hegemony

- : Hegemony is the dominance of one group over another, often supported by legitimating norms and ideas. The term is also used to describe the relatively dominant position of a particular set of ideas and their associated tendency to become commonsensical and intuitive, thereby inhibiting the dissemination or even the articulation of alternative ideas.

High art

- : High art was a term used to describe the most aesthetically pleasing and challenging (in terms of production) arts, while low art was used to describe what was not challenging, aesthetically pleasing

Holocaust

- : The word "Holocaust," from the Greek words "holos" (whole) and "kaustos" (burned), was historically used to describe a sacrificial offering burned on an altar. Since 1945, the word has taken on a new and horrible meaning: the ideological and systematic state-sponsored

prosecution and mass murder of millions of European Jews (as well as millions of others, including Gypsies, the intellectually disabled, dissidents and homosexuals) by the German Nazi regime between 1933 and 1945. To the anti-Semitic Nazi leader Adolf Hitler, Jews were an inferior race, an alien threat to German racial purity and community. After years of Nazi rule in Germany, during which Jews were consistently persecuted, Hitler's "final solution"—now known as the Holocaust—came to fruition under the cover of World War II, with mass killing centers constructed in the concentration camps of occupied Poland. Approximately six million Jews and some 5 million others, were targeted for racial, political, ideological and behavioral reasons, and died in the Holocaust. More than one million of those who perished were children.

Marvel comics

- : Marvel Comics is the brand name and primary imprint of Marvel Worldwide Inc., formerly Marvel Publishing, Inc. and Marvel Comics Group, a publisher of American comic books and related media. In 2009, The Walt Disney Company acquired Marvel Entertainment, Marvel Worldwide's parent company. The first modern comic books under the Marvel Comics brand were the science-fiction anthology *Journey into Mystery* #69 and the teen-humor title *Patsy Walker* #95. Then, in the wake of DC Comics' success in reviving superheroes in the late 1950s and early 1960s, particularly with the Flash, Green Lantern, Batman, Superman, Wonder Woman, Green Arrow and other members of the team the Justice League of America, Marvel followed suit.

Motif

- : In a literary work, a motif can be seen as an image, sound, action, or other figure that has a symbolic significance, and contributes toward the development of a theme. A motif is a recurrent image, idea, or symbol that develops or explains a theme. Sometimes examples of motif are mistakenly identified as examples of symbols. Symbols are images, ideas, sounds, or words that represent something else, and help to understand an idea or a thing. Motifs, on the other hand, are images, ideas, sounds, or words that help to explain the central idea of a literary work – the theme. Moreover, a symbol may appear once or twice in a literary work, whereas a motif is a recurring element.

- Paradigmatic** : Paradigmatic means relating to the way different words or language items can be chosen to play a particular part in a language structure.
- Symbolism** : Symbolism is the use of symbols to signify ideas and qualities, by giving them symbolic meanings that are different from their literal sense. Symbolism can take different forms. Generally, it is an object representing another, to give an entirely different meaning that is much deeper and more significant. Sometimes, however, an action, an event or a word spoken by someone may have a symbolic value. For instance, “smile” is a symbol of friendship. Similarly, the action of someone smiling at you may stand as a symbol of the feeling of affection which that person has for you. Symbols do shift their meanings depending on the context they are used in. “A chain,” for example, may stand for “union” as well as “imprisonment”. Thus, symbolic meaning of an object or an action is understood by when, where, and how it is used. It also depends on who reads the work.

2.11 SUGGESTED READINGS & REFERENCES

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UNIT 3 LITERATURE AND CINEMA: AN INTRODUCTION

Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Literature and Cinema as Art Forms
 - 3.2.1 Fear of Cinema
 - 3.2.2 Do Films Always Follow Literature?
- 3.3 Adaptations: An Introduction
 - 3.3.1 What is an Adaptation?
 - 3.3.2 Types of Adaptations
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 - 3.3.4 What Gets Adapted?
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- 3.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.6 Questions
- 3.7 Hints to Check Your Progress
- 3.8 Glossary
- 3.9 Suggested Readings & References

3.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, you will be acquainted with the various ways in which art has been defined over the ages and how the definition has expanded to include the recording arts i.e. films, television and photography. The unit discusses the relationship between literature and cinema in terms of borrowings, similarities and differences. Adaptations are one of the ways in which one can see the interaction between the two. The unit defines adaptations and discusses the various ways in which they are perceived. It also addresses the ways in which adaptations are dismissed by literary critics and film theorists and suggests ways in which we can understand and analyse adaptations. Let us explore the meaning of art next.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

We will begin our discussion on Literature and Cinema as art forms by examining the concept/ notion of art. What is art? What did art mean at different points of time? Has the meaning/notion of art developed over time? The notion of art has evolved over a period of time. The ancients recognised seven activities, that is, history, poetry, comedy, tragedy, music, dance and astronomy as ‘art’. These activities described the universe and our place in it. These arts were defined as

ways to understand the mysteries of the universe and they themselves took on the aura of mysteries. The concept of art was later redefined to mean the ability to craft/create something skillfully. It was in the seventeenth century that the range expanded to include painting, architecture, sculpture and drawing. This was the period that saw the emergence of astronomy and geometry which were categorised as science, as against art. The range of art narrowed to its present domain in the nineteenth century and was predicated on the Romantic theory of the Promethean artist who is a prophet and “unacknowledged legislator(s) of the world” (Shelley).

Originally, the only way to produce art was in real time - the singer sang the song, the storyteller narrated the tale and actors enacted the drama. It was with the development of drawing and writing that the possibility of words and images being stored was created. The recording arts created more opportunities for a direct communication between the subject and its audience. The history of the recording arts can be seen as a direct progression towards greater verisimilitude/realism. A colour film produces a more believable version of reality than a black and white film and a sound film is more closely related to the actual experience as compared to a silent film. Having said that, let us now turn our attention to Literature and Cinema as art forms.

3.2 LITERATURE AND CINEMA AS ART FORMS

Film is often seen as art that is a synthesis and an amalgam of all the other performance arts,

A composite language by virtue of its diverse matters of expression - sequential photography, music, phonetic sound and noise-the cinema inherits all the art forms associated with these matters of expression...-the visuals of photography and painting, the movement of dance, the décor of architecture and the performance of theater. (Stam 61)

Similarly, **Susan Sontag**, an American writer and filmmaker, considers cinema “a kind of pan-art” that absorbs the characteristic features of all the other arts and at the same time there is nothing that it has which is not there in one or another of these arts. Film shares its visual component with painting, its ability to show movement with dance, its potential to move the audience emotionally with music, its dependence on spectacle and performance with theatre and its technological artistry with photography. What then, is the relation between Literature and Cinema?

The art with which it shares the most in terms of its elementary features such as plot, character, theme, imagery and the ability to play with space and time is literature. Thus, those who intend to establish the uniqueness of films, do so by constantly asserting its difference from literature and underlining the difference between ‘image’ which is seen as iconic and ‘words’ which are considered symbolic. Both image and word signify something, are denotative and connotative and to understand them one needs both perception and cognition. One has to see and reflect upon what one has seen to understand both words and images. **Christian Metz**, a French film theorist argued that the cinematographic image is connotatively richer than using words alone, since in cinema the image combines with word and music, thus, heightening the connotative possibilities.

Films may not have pre-decided rules or grammar but like verbal language, by arranging shots in a relational sequence, they narrate a story. **Sergei Eisenstein**, one of the earliest theorists of cinema pointed out how film makers create meaning by “combining shots that are depictive, single in meaning, neutral in content into intellectual contexts and series.” A single shot conveys something but the arrangement of shots in a certain way tells us the story the director is trying to narrate. It is preposterous to assume that an image does not require interpretation, since we relate with prior images and our perception of those images.

When one moves above and beyond the need to establish the superiority of literature or the uniqueness of cinema it will be realised that far from being literature’s foe, cinema is a form of literature. Not only does it share the language of literature, it combines words, images and sound and thus, could be seen as the next step/evolution of the ability to narrate stories. Film and literature are temporal arts that need time to unravel. This makes them different from painting and photography which are static visual forms which might have narrative elements but no sequential development. The camera, like a literary narrator acts as an intermediary between the audience and the subject. It directs our point of view, determines our distance or closeness to the characters and action sharpens or sometimes blurs our vision, tells us what to see and how to see it. Narrative theory distinguishes between various forms of storytelling, for instance, drama is a story told without the intervention of a narrator while, a narrative is mediated by a narrator. Film appears to be a form of dramatic storytelling but it is actually a form of narrative storytelling like a novel. While we agree that cinema is a form of literature, we need to also keep in mind the fact that cinema as a medium has always been feared. Why? This is what we take up next.

3.2.1 Fear of Cinema

Walter Benjamin in his seminal essay, “*The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*” argued how art loses its ‘aura’, the distinctive mark of the artist and its authenticity because of mechanical reproduction. A photograph or a film which is for mass consumption does not have the ‘aura’ that a painting does. It is believed that in cinema, we see an assembly line production of commodities for a passive consumer, who is offered dreams and aspirations but he/she is not made to question the need for those dreams and aspirations.

The film experienced tremendous changes in the thirties and forties with the onset of the era of sound. **Andre Bazin** in “*The Evolution of the Language of Cinema*” declared that “the filmmaker...is, as last, the equal of the novelist.” Films not only had the language of literature at their disposal, in the first few years of the sound era, it became a medium of storytelling that appealed to the masses as well as the high-brow audience. This period saw the emergence of films as an all pervasive medium, and the widespread popularity of radio and television which made the defenders of elite culture panic. There was a fear that the voracious appetite and greed of the entertainment industry would eventually lead to its parasitic consumption of literary works. **Virginia Woolf** expressed her apprehensions about this new medium,

The cinema fell upon its prey with immense rapacity, and to this moment largely subsists upon the body of its unfortunate victim. But the results are disastrous to both. The alliance is unnatural. Eye and brain are torn asunder ruthlessly as they try vainly to work in couples. (168)

Hannah Arendt expressed concerns about the “gargantuan appetites” of the entertainment industry which, in its attempt to offer new goods, turns towards literature, “This material, however, cannot be offered as it is; it must be prepared and altered in order to become entertaining.” The concern was that in the process of making it “entertaining”, there may be a substantial loss of the content and ethos of the literary source. It was assumed that when literature is adapted for the screen, it leads to mindless paring, dilution and simplification of something which is complex and sublime. This line of argument obviously leads us to the next topic for discussion.

3.2.2 Do Films Always Follow Literature?

Films do not always follow a literary text as they can and do provide a source - text for literature in the form of novelisations. Novels, poetry and theatre also adopt and adapt cinematographic materials and *tropes* as significant thematic and structuring principles. **John Edmund Gardner**, a British writer best known for his spy fiction novelised two **James Bond** films, *License to Kill* and *Golden Eye*. Adaptation is not the only manner in which literature and film are associated with each other. *The Hours* is a film that draws upon *Mrs. Dalloway* and Virginia Woolf’s life. In a similar fashion, the film, *Manto* (2018) fruitfully brings together **Saadat Hasan Manto**’s life and works by making frequent allusions to his short stories. Having introduced literature and cinema as art forms, looked at why cinema is feared and at whether films/ cinema follows literature, we shall begin by examining what adaptation means and trace the history of adaptations.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) How has the definition of art changed with time?

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3.3 ADAPTATIONS: AN INTRODUCTION

D W Griffith, who is often credited with “inventing Hollywood” and with giving shape and identity to the unique language of films, typically based his work on literature. He adapted writers like **Tennyson**, **Browning** and **Thomas Hardy** but he learnt the intricacies of film making, from **Charles Dickens**. It is in Dickens’ fiction that he came across literary equivalents of cinematic techniques such as close-up, montage and dissolve, which earned Griffith the epithet, “father of film technique.” Griffith cannot be considered the father of adaptation, since he was following the practice of many French and Italian filmmakers in his turn to literary sources for films. It was in 1902 that **Georges Melies** made *A Trip to the Moon* that has its origins in a novel by **Jules Verne**. A more serious and systematic attempt to make adaptations was made in 1908 that saw the formation of *Societe Film d’ Art*, a French company made primarily to translate classics, such as novels by **Balzac**, **Hugo** and Dickens for the screen. **William Shakespeare** and **Jane Austen** are two authors whose works are enthusiastically

discussed by adaptors. Adaptations have continued to thrive despite the hostility of the guardians of high brow culture. Since the inception of the Oscars, adaptations such as *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1935), *Gone with the Wind* (1939) and *Rebecca* (1940) have been chosen as best films. But what is an adaptation? We shall address this question next.

3.3.1 What is an Adaptation?

Linda Hutcheon in *A Theory of Adaptation* defines adaptation as an “announced and extensive transposition of a particular work or works.” It is the transfer of a story from one medium to another. It might strictly adhere to the source text or it might be a radical reworking of its form, manner and content. The fascination for adaptations is because of the possibility offered to relive an experience and to see what someone else has made of the story we once enjoyed reading. This could involve a shift of medium or genre (such as novel to film) or a change of context (**Vishal Bhardwaj**’s film *Haider*, an adaptation of William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* is set in Kashmir in the twenty first century) or change of point of view (telling the story from the perspective of a different character). The shift could also be from the real and historical to the fictional, for instance the film *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag* (2013), is based on **Milkha Singh**’s life.

Since films are made for an international audience, adapters make changes in the racial and gender politics of the narrative, purging it of elements which might hurt the sensibilities of the audience. **Ian Fleming**’s *James Bond* novels were a product of the Cold War propaganda and were reflective of the pride in British culture. The novels revolved around a series of binaries such as west vs. east, capitalism vs. communism, Britain vs. Russia and men vs. women. The films, with the intention to give Bond fame worldwide diluted these categories and changed with the changing times. Film Adapters try to indigenise stories to make them resonate with the audience they are adapting for. It is a form of intertextuality since we look at an adaptation as a repetition of other works but with a slight or sometimes drastic variation. It is a “derivation without being derivative - a work that is second without being secondary”, (Hutcheon). The intertextuality extends not only to the source text, but also to contemporary events. The audience, watching an adaptation of *Othello*, a play about sexual jealousy, racial politics, spousal abuse and the fall of the hero will probably see the similarities with the trial of O J Simpson. O J Simpson, an American football player was accused of murdering his wife and her lover. Those reading or watching William Shakespeare’s *Othello* will also be reminded of the O J Simpson trial, the trial of the century **Jeffery Toobin**, an American lawyer and writer, wrote *The Run of his Life: The People V. O J Simpson* (1997) which was later adapted for television as *The People Vs. O J Simpson: American Crime Story* (2016). Needless, to say there are many ways in which adaptations can occur or take place and shape. Let us look at the types of adaptations next.

3.3.2 Types of Adaptations

Adaptations are often compared and contrasted with translations since both involve transposition from one form into another. Film theorists cite **John Dryden**’s categorisation of translations to talk about the various forms taken by adaptation. According to Dryden, translation could be a “metaphrase”, a word by word and line by line shift from one language to another, “paraphrase or

translation with latitude” where, the author is not strictly followed but always kept in mind and “imitation” where the translator takes great liberties with the words and meaning of the author. In a similar fashion, **Geoffrey Wagner** (*The Novel and the Cinema*) divides film adaptations into three categories- “transposition” in which there is no interference with the source text and it is transferred to the screen as it is, “commentary” where deliberately or unconsciously changes are made and “analogy” which significantly deviates from the source text, thus, creating another work of art.

3.3.3 Popularity of Adaptations

In *Books and Plays in Film, 1896-1915*, **Dennis Gifford** lists 861 authors whose works were adapted to film in the first twenty years of the industry. Adaptations are so much a part of our culture that they affirm **Walter Benjamin**’s insight that “storytelling is always the art of repeating stories.” In 1939, every competing film at the Academy Awards was an adaptation - *Wuthering Heights*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Gone with the Wind* and many others. They are so ubiquitous that films have even been made about the process of adapting a literary text for the screen. **Spike Jonze**’s *Adaptation* (2002), written by **Charlie Kaufman** is about the process of adapting **Susan Orlean**’s *The Orchid Thief*. It revolves around the trials and tribulations of Charlie Kaufman, making an attempt to write the screenplay while suffering from writer’s block. The film won the British And Film Academy Television Award (BAFTA) for Best Adapted Screenplay. In addition to adaptations for the screen, there are adaptations in the form of games as well, for instance in the dice game adaptation of Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, the player who gets to the church first to get married, wins the game. But why do you think adaptations are important? Have we always adapted books/novels into cinema? This section and the next sub-section will provide some answers for us.

A film which is an adaptation of a classic literary text aims to acquire the cultural capital and prestige/respectability accorded to the classic. One of the largest markets for adaptations is students and teachers of literature. One of the reasons behind the popularity of adaptations is the opportunity offered to the audience to remember a narrative they once read and also see how that narrative can be innovated upon. The pleasure lies in “repetition with variation, from the comfort of ritual combined with the piquancy of surprise” (Hutcheon). Adaptation involves interpretation and re-configuration and this understanding of adaptation also offers one possible way of understanding the relationship between the source text and its adaptation. The film is thus, a “chance to offer an analysis and an appreciation of one work of art through another” (**Boyum** 62). Having said that, the next important thing that comes to mind is the subject matter – does every classic/novel get adapted? Or does anything and everything get adapted? How does one decide what needs to be adapted or what would make a good adaptation.

3.3.4 What Gets Adapted?

Novels and films represent the world and lives at a much greater scale than in other genres thus, novels attract a lot of adaptors. Novels and films are both skilled in the rendering of the passage of time and location in space. Modernist fiction with its experiment with form and symbolic richness does not get adapted as much as realist narratives. Charles Dickens, **Agatha Christie** and Ian Fleming

are adapted more often than **James Joyce**, **Samuel Beckett** and **Joseph Conrad**. The usual process in the adaptation of novels is the paring down of details or excision by removal of certain sections or sub-plots or characters to make it a crisp and compact story which will continue to hold the attention of the audience till the very end. As against adaptations of novels, poetry and short stories which are frowned upon, cinematic adaptations of plays gain far greater acceptance since performance is an essential feature of plays, an aspect that is enhanced by the adaptation. Adaptations of short stories require an expansion of incidents and characters to turn into a full length film. Poetry gets adapted rarely since the process demands an extensive elaboration of setting, incident and character. **Derek Jarman's** *The Angelic Conversation* (1985) is an adaptation of William Shakespeare's sonnets. An adaptation of a classic or a book which enjoys the prestige of being canonical is subject to greater scrutiny and criticism as compared to an adaptation of popular fiction. The adaptors feel that they can take more aesthetic liberties with popular fiction since it is meant to be read and enjoyed by the masses like films and television shows. It is not just about why adaptations and what gets adapted. It is also about who does the adaptation or who is the adaptor? This we examine in the next sub-section. Thereafter, we follow it up with the question, how does the adaptor adapt something for a film or a cinematic representation?

3.3.5 Who is the Adaptor?

As against literature which is seen as the product of one controlling sensibility, films are a result of collaborative efforts. The adaptor is the screenwriter who creatively transforms the plot, characters, dialogue and theme; the actor who interprets the characters and colours them with his/her own understanding; the director who constructs the *mis-en-scene* and the editor who arranges the pieces together to form one coherent narrative. How does the adaptation process unfold? Let's look at that next.

3.3.6 How Does the Adaptor Adapt?

The approach of the adaptor towards the source text determines the nature of the adaptation. **Andrew Davies**, who has attained great popularity as an adaptor identified ten secrets to becoming successful,

- 1) Read the book.
- 2) Ask yourself: Why this book, and why now?
- 3) Ask yourself: Whose story is this, really?
- 4) Don't be afraid to change things, especially openings.
- 5) Don't start without a plan.
- 6) Never use a line of dialogue if you can achieve the effect with a look.
- 7) Crystallize dialogue to its essence.
- 8) Write scenes that aren't in the book.
- 9) Avoid voice over, flashbacks, and characters talking directly to camera.
- 10) Break your own rules when it feels the right thing to do. (*The Telegraph*, 2011)

Davies' "secrets" indicate how adaptation was about freeing the adapted text from the confines of the author's intention or meaning and making it available to the masses. The adaptor need not be always looking towards the adapted text, since what he/she is attempting is the art of democratisation, to make the story available to those who may or may not be familiar with its literary antecedent. But like all literary/ creative genres, film adaptations come in for a lot of criticism. Let's see what happens next.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) What do you understand by adaptations? Discuss with examples.

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3.3.7 Criticism of Adaptations

Alan Resnais, a French film director and screenwriter once said, "I would not want to shoot the adaptation of a novel because to make a film of it is a little like reheating a meal." Many film makers, writers and audience believe that an adaptation needs to be faithful to its source text and be accurate in its depiction of the literary text, historical situation or period. If it deviates from the text, it is considered a bad adaptation and if it strictly adheres to the text, it is still seen as a copy which pales in comparison to the original. The concluding paragraphs of reviews of adaptations often have the phrase, "not as good as the source text." Every viewer yearns for depiction of his/her version of the text which itself indicates the impossibility of the venture since no two readings or interpretations of a story are similar. These variations in terms of interpretations of a text are wider in case of fantasy fiction since each reader visualises the characters and situations differently. These perceptions of adaptations indicate the implicit faith in the superiority of literature over cinema, or to use **Robert Stam**'s words, *logophilia* (considering words as sacred) and *iconophobia* (suspicion of the visual medium). It is believed that any medium meant for mass consumption would lack the complexity and nuances of literature. Films are labour and capital intensive and that is one of the reasons behind questioning its status as art. It is a group production that does not have a single artist hence the question - can there be art without an artist? And moving on, how should one approach an adaptation?

3.3.8 How to Approach Adaptations?

When a book is adapted for the screen, it encourages us to read it, similarly when a book we have read is turned into a film or a television show we are lured into watching it. In 1939, when the film adaptation of *Wuthering Heights* was released it catapulted the sales of the book. Instead of looking at a film as parasitic it is important that we look at what a film brings to a book and the layers it adds to the narrative. It is not analytically useful to look at literature as a dominant genre and deny the possibilities offered by the visual medium. It is also useful to look at the literary text as one of the very many narratives that are in dialogue with the

film/television adaptation. For instance, the film *Pinjar*, not only borrows from **Amrita Pritam**'s novella, it also employs the *tropes* and images of other films on the partition of India. In addition to Pritam's *Pinjar*, her poem, "*Aaj Ankha Waris Shah Nu*" ("Ode to Waris Shah") frames the narrative of the film, thus, adding another dimension to the story. The joy of watching an adaptation would be increased manifold when we find other narratives embedded in it. It would be pertinent for us to examine all aspects of criticism. Let's do that quickly in the next subsection.

3.3.9 Pitfalls of Fidelity Criticism

The move away from fidelity criticism (comparing the film to the source text) and looking at the adaptation within a wider web of inter-sexuality is richly illuminating. Fidelity criticism is based on the assumption that the adaptor is trying to reproduce the original text, when he/she might be trying to contest the aesthetic and political values of that text. For example, **Anurag Kashyap**'s *Dev D*, is an adaptation and also a parody of **Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay**'s classic Bengali novel, *Devdas* and **Sanjay Leela Bhansali**'s adaptation of the same. We shall move on that next. We should also know how we need to be able to interpret an adapted film properly.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) What do you understand by fidelity criticism?

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3.4 HOW TO INTERPRET A FILM?

In order to come to terms with a film, it is important that we look at the interaction between *mis-en-scene*, editing and sound. Visual representations are rich in complex associations (close up shots create psychological intimacy, POV-point of view shots make us look at things/people from a character's perspective) and music provides us an insight into the characters' emotions, arousing similar emotional responses in the audience. While looking at an adaptation we should also look at the conventions of cinematic practice at the time, the preoccupations and the corpus of the director's and writer's work and the aura attached to the actors playing the various characters, to understand the narrative better. Since, there are more similarities instead of differences between literature and film, we should keep in mind the specificities of each medium and look at what they bring to each other. **Andre Bazin** claims in his essay, "*Cinema as Digest*" (1948) that "cinematic faithfulness to a form, literary or otherwise is illusory: what matters is equivalence in the meaning of the forms." While looking at adaptations, we should study how or whether the film achieves that equivalence and how it raises questions which possibly make us look at its literary source from a fresh perspective.

3.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we learnt how the recording arts created greater possibilities for reducing the gap between the subject and its audience, creating more realistic and vivid narratives in the process. Cinema is a form of art that synthesises the distinctive elements of other arts such as music, dance, photography, theatre etc. With the emergence of the era of sound, cinema was seen as literature's competitor and created fear and suspicion among the elites. Adaptation, which is a transfer of a narrative from one medium to another, offers one example of the complex interaction between literature and cinema. Instead of dismissing them as copies or derivative works, we should see the interpretive possibilities they create by adding layers and meanings. Literature and cinema have a lot in common and it will be beneficial to look at their engagements with each other.

3.6 QUESTIONS

- 1) Why do film makers turn to the library shelf for inspiration and what are the various ways in which a story is adapted for the screen?
- 2) What are the favored genres for adaptation and why?
- 3) How should we approach adaptations?

3.7 HINTS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Adaptation is a transposition/transfer of a story from one medium to another for instance novel, play, short story etc. adapted into a film or a television show. Examples: the film *Murder on the Orient Express* (2017) based on Agatha Christie's clue puzzle mystery. Vishal Bhardwaj's *Maqbool* (2003) based on William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) 'Art' was used to signify any practice or activity that explained the mysteries of the universe and the place of human beings in it. The definition changed with the emergence of science. It also meant craft/skill but later it changed to signify the ability to create something out of words, images, colors etc.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Comparing an adaptation to its source text or literary antecedent to see how faithful it is to the text and labeling it good or bad accordingly is fidelity criticism.

Hints to Longer Answers:

- 1) The desire to recreate the experience of reading a memorable story and to acquire prestige/cultural capital by adapting a literary classic are some of the reasons behind the turn to the library shelf by film makers. The adaptations could be loose or radical and involve a shift of medium, context, perspective etc.
- 2) Novels and plays are adapted more than poetry and short stories because they share more in common with films. Expansion and elaboration of incident

and characters would be required to adapt a poem or a short story which is considerably more difficult than the paring down of a novel to turn it into a film. Linear, realist narratives are adapted more than modernist fiction because modernist fiction is experimental in terms of form and symbolism.

- 3) We should move beyond fidelity criticism and look at the source text as one of the various texts that inspired or is embedded in the film. We should also look at how the film creates meaning through words, images, camera movement, mis-en-scene, music etc. Instead of rejecting adaptations and considering them as copies of the original, we should look at them as interpretations which might make us look at the source text in a new light.

3.8 GLOSSARY

- Alfred Tennyson** : Alfred Tennyson (1809-92), 1st Baron Tennyson FRS was a British poet. He was the Poet Laureate of Great Britain and Ireland during much of Queen Victoria's reign and remains one of the most popular British poets. In 1829, Tennyson was awarded the Chancellor's Gold Medal at Cambridge for one of his first pieces, "Timbuktu."
- André Bazin** : André Bazin (1918 – 58), was a renowned and influential French film critic and film theorist. Bazin started to write about film in 1943 and was a co-founder of the renowned film magazine *Cahiers du cinéma* in 1951, along with Jacques Doniol-Valcroze and Joseph-Marie Lo Duca.
- Charles Dickens** : Charles John Huffam Dickens FRSA (1812-70), was an English writer and social critic. He created some of the world's best-known fictional characters and is regarded by many as the greatest novelist of the Victorian era.
- Close up** : A close-up or closeup in filmmaking, television production, still photography, and the comic strip medium is a type of shot that tightly frames a person or object. Close-ups are one of the standard shots used regularly with medium and long shots.
- Connotation** : Associated or suggested meaning
- Cultural capital** : Cultural knowledge such as knowledge of the arts, possession of a certain manner of speech and dress which confers prestige and social status.
- Denotation** : Literal or surface meaning
- Dissolve** : A dissolve is a classic editing technique used to transition between shots, typically shots that bridge two scenes together. As opposed to a straight cut from one shot to another, a dissolve involves the gradual transition from the first image to the next.

- Honoré de Balzac** : Honoré de Balzac (1799 - 1850), was a French novelist and playwright. The novel sequence *La Comédie Humaine*, which presents a panorama of post-Napoleonic French life, is generally viewed as his magnum opus.
- Ian Fleming** : Ian Lancaster Fleming (1908-64), was an English author, journalist and naval intelligence officer who is best known for his James Bond series of spy novels.
- Indigenise** : to alter (something) so as to make it fit in with the local culture ‘
- Intersexuality** : Multiple ways in which a text is interwoven/made up of other texts such as literary echoes, allusions and transformations of features of other texts.
- Intertextuality** : Intertextuality is the shaping of a text’s meaning by another text. It is the interconnection between similar or related works of literature that reflect and influence an audience’s interpretation of the text. Intertextuality is the relation between texts that are inflicted by means of quotations and allusion.
- Jane Austen** : Jane Austen (1775-1817), was an English novelist known primarily for her six major novels, which interpret, critique and comment upon the British landed gentry at the end of the 18th century.
- Jules Verne** : Jules Gabriel Verne (1828 –1905) was a French novelist, poet, and playwright. His collaboration with the publisher Pierre-Jules Hetzel led to the creation of the *Voyages extraordinaires*, a series of bestselling adventure novels including *Journey to the Center of the Earth* (1864), *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1870), and *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1873). Verne is generally considered a major literary author in France and most of Europe, where he has had a wide influence on the literary avant-garde and on surrealism.
- Mis-en-scene-French** : Refers to the arrangement of props, characters, lighting etc. on stage or before for “placing on stage”: the camera in a film.
- Montage** : Showing sequential development by piecing together separate parts. In cinematographic terms, narrating a story by arranging, selecting and editing shots.
- Robert Browning** : Robert Browning (1812-89), was an English poet and playwright whose mastery of the dramatic monologue made him one of the foremost Victorian poets. His poems are known for their irony, characterization, dark humour, social commentary,

historical settings, and challenging vocabulary and syntax.

- Thomas Hardy** : Thomas Hardy OM (1840-1928), was an English novelist and poet. A Victorian realist in the tradition of George Eliot, he was influenced both in his novels and in his poetry by Romanticism, especially William Wordsworth.
- Victor Hugo** : Victor Marie Hugo (1802–1885) was a French poet, novelist, and dramatist of the Romantic Age. During a literary career that spanned more than sixty years, he wrote abundantly in an exceptional variety of genres: lyrics, satires, epics, philosophical poems, epigrams, novels, history, critical essays, political speeches, funeral orations, diaries, letters public and private, and dramas in verse and prose. Hugo is considered to be one of the greatest and best-known French writers. Outside France, his most famous works are the novels *Les Misérables*, 1862, and *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* (French: *Notre-Dame de Paris*), 1831.
- William Shakespeare** : William Shakespeare (1564-1616), was an English poet, playwright, and actor, widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language and the world's greatest dramatist. He is often called England's national poet and the "Bard of Avon."

3.9 SUGGESTED READINGS & REFERENCES

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For types of shots refer to the following link: https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/ultimate-guide-to-camera-shots/?fbclid=IwAR2vkkRoaz-dKrcP1V7l_H8ARPkAYcrsQlY85EYHL2FRREOgKH-pe3uyOIE#crane-shot



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UNIT 4 RUSKIN BOND AND VISHAL BHARDWAJ'S *THE BLUE UMBRELLA*

Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Ruskin Bond: An Introduction
 - 4.2.1 Defining the Novella
 - 4.2.2 *The Blue Umbrella*
- 4.3 Vishal Bhardwaj: An Introduction
 - 4.3.1 *Makdee* - Bhardwaj's Directorial Debut
 - 4.3.2 *7 Khoon Maaf* - Adaptation of Ruskin Bond's "*Susanaa's Seven Husbands*"
 - 4.3.3 Filming *The Blue Umbrella*
- 4.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.5 Questions
- 4.6 Hints to Check Your Progress
- 4.7 Glossary
- 4.8 Suggested Readings & References

4.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we will study the life and works of **Ruskin Bond** and **Vishal Bhardwaj**, and attempt a close textual analysis of Bond's novella *The Blue Umbrella* and its cinematic adaptation. We will also look at the distinctive form of a novella and understand Ruskin Bond's motivation behind writing short stories and novellas. Instead of doing a simple comparison of the novella and the film, to see how close or loyal the adaptation is to the source text, we will explore the possibilities opened up by the visual medium. Let us begin by introducing you to Ruskin Bond and Vishal Bhardwaj were quickly as we will be examining them individually later.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Ruskin Bond is an Indian children's author of British descent who has written more than forty books for children. He has been a *Sahitya Akademi* recipient (1992) for his novel *Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra* and was awarded the *Padma Shri* in 1999 and the *Padma Bhushan* (2014). The *Padma Shri* is the fourth-highest civilian award in India. It is awarded by the Government of India every year on Republic Day (26th January). The *Padma Bhushan* is the third-highest civilian award given for "distinguished service of a high order...without distinction of race, occupation, position or sex." An interesting fact about Ruskin Bond is that his novel *A Flight of Pigeons* was adapted into a *Bollywood* film produced by **Shashi Kapoor** and directed by **Shyam Benegal** into *Juno* (1978). The popular *Doordarshan* TV series *Ek Tha Rusty* is based on his Rusty stories. But, it was in 2005, that Bond collaborated with the Bollywood Director Vishal

Bhardwaj and made a film based on his popular novel for children, *The Blue Umbrella*. The movie won the National Award for Best Children's film. Vishal Bhardwaj's film *7 Khoon Maaf* (2011), is also based on Bond's short story *Susanna's Seven Husbands*.

Vishal Bharadwaj is an Indian film Director, screenwriter, producer, music composer and a playback singer. He is also a highly acclaimed director and is the recipient of seven National Awards in various categories. He is well known for his musical compositions in **Gulzar's** *Maachis* (1996), *Satya* (1998), directorial debut *Makdee* (2002), and is well known for his cinematic adaptations. Suffice it to say that we will be pretty well acquainted with both these gentlemen in the sections that follow.

4.2 RUSKIN BOND: AN INTRODUCTION

Ruskin Bond, an Indian author of British descent was born in 1934 in Kasauli, Himachal Pradesh and grew up in Jamnagar, Dehradun, Shimla and Delhi. He was named after the Victorian writer, John Ruskin. Ruskin Bond studied in Bishop Cotton School, Shimla, a boarding school and went to Dehradun for his holidays where his mother's family was settled. He talks of the loneliness and despair of his childhood when he witnessed his parents' frequent quarrels. He believes that those who have had happy and contented childhoods either don't remember them or lack the ability to understand the world and dreams of children,

I don't suppose I would have written so much about childhood or even about other children if my own childhood had been all happiness and light....Some of us are born sensitive. And, if on top of that, we are pulled about in different directions (both emotionally and physically), we might just end up becoming writers. (4)

The two years that he spent with his father after his parents' separation were the happiest years of his childhood. It was the money that his father earned by selling his stamp collection which made Ruskin Bond realise that it was possible to turn your hobby into a means to eke out a livelihood. Since childhood, he was a voracious reader who read whatever he could lay his hands on. It was through the writer-heroes in **Charles Dickens's** *David Copperfield* and **Hugh Walpole's** *Fortitude*, that lead to the zeal and aspiration for Bond to be a writer. His father often read, **Lewis Carroll's** *Alice in Wonderland* to him and it helped him appreciate the little absurdities of life. You have already examined Lewis Carroll at length in this course in Block 2, which deals with Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*.

Ruskin Bond's father died when he was ten, the following period when he was with his mother and stepfather made him turn to books even more to find solace and refuge. In addition to literature, he found comfort in nature, "I was beginning to find that trees gave me a feeling of security, as well as privacy and a calm haven" (35). He published some of his first stories in *The Illustrated Weekly of India* and *The Sunday Statesman*. *The Room on the Roof*, his first novel received the **John Llewellyn Rhys** Prize in 1957. He went to England for a brief spell to write and publish his work but it was the love for the villages and small towns of India which brought him back. A city, according to him is busy and impersonal. While talking about Delhi in *Bus Stop*, *Pipal Nagar* he says, "It was prosperous

but without a heart" (54). He describes himself as a visual writer with the habit of visualising his stories, characters and incidents. He lives in Landour, Mussoorie with his adopted family. Having been introduced to the biographical details of our writer Ruskin Bond and establishing his connection with the world of films and adaptation, we shall now turn to defining the novella as we explore *The Blue Umbrella* thoroughly.

4.2.1 Defining the Novella

It was through writers like **H E Bates**, **William Saroyan** and **A E Coppard** that Ruskin Bond realised that the form of the short story and novella were better suited to his temperament as compared to other genres, "snatching at life and recording its impressions and sensations rather than trying to digest it whole" (75). Bond, has the ability to capture moments which otherwise appear inconsequential but in the hands of a sensitive artist delineate the dramas, conflicts, ironies and tragedies of human existence. He likes writing short stories because they catch the intensity and essence of the moment. **C R Mandy** who published Ruskin Bond's early work in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, called novella a "literary dachshund" (a form with a long body and short legs).

Novellas lie somewhere between a novel and a short story, since they are not long enough to be a novel and not short enough to be a short story. The term 'novella' is Italian for "little new thing" and is used to refer to a short tale in prose. Ruskin Bond's first novella was, *Time Stops at Shamli* which took a long time to get published. When he started writing, Bond wrote short stories and essays for the need of a regular income but when he had the luxury of no financial pressures, he indulged in longer narratives such as a novella.

When he showed *The Blue Umbrella*, to a friend, he suggested that Bond should write it as a children's story, which is precisely what he had done. When Bond pointed that out to his friend, he said, "It could be both things..." It is a story which could be read and appreciated by both children and adults which is also true of the children's films made by Vishal Bhardwaj. Ruskin Bond outlined the process of creation of this novella, "The characters and the incidents first fell into place as I went along, without any attempt to invent a plot or point a moral. And yet it makes a point."

4.2.2 *The Blue Umbrella*

The novella begins with Binya frantically calling her blue-grey cow, "Neelu! Neelu!" and her companion, Gori, a white cow, both of whom were fond of wandering off down to the stream or the pine forest. Her brother, Bijju who used to help her otherwise, was busy studying for his exams. Binya, like her creator and her adaptor was, a girl whose heart was in the mountains. The nearest town which was five miles away scared her with its people and frenzy. The story is set in a village in Garhwal, which like any other village was inhabited by people who were innocent, had simple needs and knew each other. It was a village where a child's age was remembered by referring to the snow that fell in that particular year, for instance, Binya's mother pointed out that she was born in the year when the snow had reached the windows. They had terraced fields where they grew potatoes, beans, maize etc. Binya wore a leopard's claw around her neck to ward off evil and for good luck, which shows the rich culture and strong beliefs of the people of Garhwal.

While looking for her cow, she came across a group of picnickers from the plains. She tried to understand their clothes and accents, but before long, her gaze falls on a beautiful, frilly, blue umbrella, “The umbrella was like a flower, a great blue flower that had sprung up on the dry brown hillside” (105). When the holidaymakers see her, they assume that she is a poor and filthy village girl and offer her something to eat. This encounter is revelatory of the condescending nature of city dwellers when they come into contact with those from small towns and villages. Ruskin Bond satirises this equation of simplicity with poverty and ignorance. One of the picnickers mistakes her leopard’s claw as tiger’s claw and in the attempt to parade his understanding of the region says, “These people wear them to keep away evil spirits.” Instead of making an attempt to understand the culture, customs and folklore of Garhwal, this patronising tourist appropriates the voice of Binya and the community to which she belongs. They want to buy Binya’s pendant for 2-3 rupees since, “she’s sure to need the money” (106) but Binya wants the blue umbrella. The bargain is made and Binya acquires the umbrella, “That patch of sky blue silk could always be seen on the hillside” (107).

There is a single tea shop on the Tehri road and it was owned by Ram Bharosa. He is a selfish and insensitive man who takes the most prized possession of the children when they cannot pay him back for the sweets and cookies that they have bought from his shop. He is envious of Binya because of her blue umbrella. He tries to convince her that it was for the *memsahibs* and would not be of any use against the sun or rain. Binya knew that, “it was a beautiful plaything. And that was exactly why she had fallen in love with it.” She was almost on the verge of losing her blue umbrella because of a strong gust of wind. The umbrella fell off the cliff and got stuck in a cherry tree. Binya, without any concern for her own life climbed down the cliff to retrieve her umbrella, “She looked down, and it was only then that she felt afraid. She was right over the chasm, balanced precariously about eighty feet above the boulder-strewn stream (110). “

Everyone in the village was jealous of Binya because of her blue umbrella. The schoolmaster’s wife believed that she being a “second class B A” had a better claim on the umbrella than a poor farmer’s daughter. Binya generously offered the umbrella to those who looked unhappy while the adults around her either envied her or hoped and prayed that her umbrella would shrivel in the sun or collapse in a breeze or get destroyed by lightning. As against the mean envy of the adults, the children were all praises for the umbrella.

Ruskin Bond portrays the beauty and terror of life in the mountains very vividly. His stories describe his love for the hills and small towns of India. In *Time Stops at Shamli*, he says, “Shamli is a small station at the foot of the Shivalik hills and the Shivaliks lie at the foot of the Himalayas, which in turn lie at the feet of God” (1). The rain turns the hills lush green, ferns and lilies spring up everywhere, the mist floats up the valley, but the rain also brings leeches and field rats to the chagrin of villagers like Binya’s mother whose stored grains are spoiled by the rats. The rain also brings venomous snakes and Binya has to use her umbrella to defend herself.

Ram Bharosa is the richest man in the village and he desperately wants to possess the blue umbrella. He tells Rajaram, a young boy who runs small errands for him that wanting and not owning the blue umbrella is like a sickness. He is almost poetic in his desire for the blue umbrella, “Of what use is a poppy in a cornfield?

Of what use is a rainbow? ... I too have a soul. I want the umbrella, because I want its beauty to be mine!" (115) This shows that the umbrella is a metaphor of art/beauty/ human desires and dreams which sometimes make an individual think and behave in an irrational way. Rajaram offers to get him the umbrella for a paltry sum of three rupees. He finds his chance when Binya is looking for porcupine quills but he is caught by Binya and her brother Bijju.

Ram Bharosa is ostracised as soon as the people of the village discover that he has tried to steal the umbrella. They stop buying supplies from his shop and walk an extra mile to the Tehri bus stand for their daily essentials. The same people who themselves desired the umbrella and dreamt of possessing it, assume a moral high ground because Ram Bharosa did what they had wished to do. He sits alone in his hut, eagerly waiting for people to come and talk to him, "He wishes he had never set eyes on it. Because of the umbrella, he had suffered the tortures of greed, the despair of loneliness", (118). His pitiable condition makes Binya wonder whether she cared more for the umbrella than necessary. It is Binya who goes to his shop to buy sweets and when Ram Bharosa goes to get them, he realises, that Binya has left her umbrella at the counter. The umbrella is finally in his possession; he cannot hold on to it and keep it for the rest of his life. He realised that he is never in the sun or in the rain and the umbrella is useless for him. He runs after Binya to give the umbrella back to her, "In that moment it belonged to both of them." She left the umbrella with him because, "an umbrella isn't everything" and when she went down the road, "there was nothing between her and the bright, blue sky." Ram Bharosa regains the trust he has lost. People start frequenting his shop where the umbrella lies for anyone and everyone to borrow. He tells the villagers that it is a gift from Binya. Ram Bharosa finds a bear's claw, and takes it to a silversmith to get a locket made for Binya.

Ruskin Bond portrays the manner in which human beings are enslaved by their desire to own and possess. Both Binya and Ram Bharosa are liberated from that desire by making the umbrella available to everyone. It is the mark of a great writer to make us understand human frailties and empathise with all his characters. He creates a world where there is a very thin line that divides the sensibility of adults from that of children. An adult could have childish desires and a child could be kinder and wiser than an adult. In most of his narratives one can see, feel and hear the mountains. It is a world he is fondly familiar with, a world he inhabits and fictionalises in his writings. **R K Narayan's** fictional *Malgudi* and Ruskin Bond's real Garhwal are so indelibly etched in their readers' minds because of the poetry of their descriptions. Let us now look at Vishal Bhardwaj and see where the two maestros meet.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) What is a novella? Discuss with reference to Ruskin Bond.

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4.3 VISHAL BHARDWAJ: AN INTRODUCTION

Vishal Bhardwaj, an Indian film director, producer, screenwriter, singer and composer was born and raised in Najibabad (Uttar Pradesh) in 1965. He represented Uttar Pradesh in the under nineteen cricket team. He made his debut as a film composer with *Abhay* (1995), a children's film but gained popularity as a music composer for Gulzar's *Maachis* (1996). Gulzar and Bhardwaj's creative association created the magic of "*Jungle Jungle Baat Chalihai, Pata chalahai*" for the Hindi dubbed version of *Jungle Book Shonen Mowgli*, a Japanese anime adaptation of Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*. A recipient of seven National Film Awards, he made his directorial debut with a children's film, *Makdee*.

Bhardwaj is perhaps one of the most literary filmmakers of the country with a flair for adaptations. A self confessed admirer of **Basheer Badr** and **Faiz Ahmed Faiz**, he pays a tribute to them through the inclusion of their *ghazals* in his films. Bhardwaj's Shakespeare trilogy, *Maqbool* (*Macbeth*), *Omkara* (*Othello*) and *Haider* (*Hamlet*) garnered him critical acclaim and popularity. He has directed a thriller, (*Kaminey*) a satire (*Matruki Bijlee ka Mandola*), a romantic story set in the time of the Second World War (*Rangoon*), an adaptation of **Charan Singh Pathik**'s short story (*Pataakha*) co-written and co-produced films such as *Ishqiya* (2010), *Dedh Ishqiya* (2014) and *Talvar* (2015) which speaks volumes about his creativity and versatility. In 2016, he was awarded the **Yash Bharti** Award by the Government of Uttar Pradesh for his tremendous contribution to Indian cinema.

4.3.1 *Makdee* - Bhardwaj's Directorial Debut

Makdee, was a film made for children between the ages of six and sixty according to Vishal Bhardwaj. It was a film which had to be produced by the Children's Film Society but because of creative disputes Bhardwaj had to make, produce and distribute the film himself. Instead of being preachy and didactic he wanted to make films which would respect the unacknowledged wisdom of children and not infantilise them. It is the story of two twin sisters, Chunni and Munni (**Shweta Basu Prasad**) set in a small village in North India. It addressed the belief in witchcraft that prevails in many parts of the country. Chunni is a mischievous girl who manages to fool those around her by her clever imitation of her docile sister, Munni until the day Munni enters the castle of a witch and is allegedly transformed into a hen. The story is about her clever schemes to save her sister and the people of the village from the evil plans of the witch (**Shabana Azmi**). The film won accolades at the Chicago International Children's Film Festival. When asked what is difficult to make, a children's film or a complex film like *Maqbool*, Bhardwaj replied, "It's very difficult to be simple and it's very easy to be difficult."

4.3.2 *7 Khoon Maaf* - Adaptation of Ruskin Bond's "*Susanna's Seven Husbands*"

The film was based on a short story, "*Susanna's Seven Husbands*" by Ruskin Bond and is about an Anglo-Indian woman, a femme fatale (**Priyanka Chopra**) and the violence unleashed by her in her search for true love. When Bhardwaj saw the title, he was befuddled, "I told myself why would a woman have seven husbands and then I came to know that she also kills them! I was immediately

hooked to it. It reminded me of a very old film, *Bluebeard's Seven Wives*.” Since it was Bond’s story, he thought it best that Bond flesh out the characters in greater detail for the screenplay. The short story was turned into an eighty page novella which then became a two hundred pages long screenplay in the hands of Vishal Bhardwaj and **Matthew Robbins**. Bhardwaj admitted that he added incidents and characters, “Naturally when you adapt a story your vision comes in it. But I have remained honest to its essence” (*The Hindu*, 2011).

4.3.3 Filming *The Blue Umbrella*

Vishal Bhardwaj’s adaptation of Ruskin Bond’s novella that won the National Film Award for Best Children’s Film (2005) is set in a village in Chamba and takes ninety minutes to unravel. **Khaled Mohamed** sees the film within the tradition of Iranian cinema, for instance, films like *Children of Heaven* and *Where is My Friend’s Home*, which take micro issues (like a child losing a pair of shoes) and turns them into social commentary. It begins with an extreme wide shot followed by the camera panning to show snow covered mountains, snowfall and in the middle of it all, a little girl whose face is hidden by a blue umbrella. Through a wide shot we move closer to the girl and see her through a leafless tree, while she is twirling her umbrella. In a scene which is covered with white, the colour of snow, the little girl is a blast of colours. In the next scene we see the Khatri tea stall where Nandu Kishore is listening to a self-help lecture about becoming a millionaire like **Bill Gates**. Nandu mistakenly thinks that Bill Gates is close to India Gate. He and his companion are simple enough to believe that nobody will lie in English - the language they are in awe of and cannot speak. **Pankaj Kapur**, who plays Nandu gives him gestures like stroking and shaking his head, enjoying his pickle and speaking a Himachali dialect, thus, giving him a life and vitality that Ruskin Bond’s Ram Bharosa did not possess in such great detail.

The songs in the film enable Bhardwaj to show the serene and splendid mountains and depict the simplicity of the villagers. In the first song, “*Mera tesu yahinada*” (“My goblin refuses to budge”) we are introduced to all the villagers while the children are collecting money for a *jagran*. The song is also used to juxtapose the magnanimity of the villagers and the **Scrooge** like Nandu’s miserliness. Bhardwaj also shows the enormous influence of Bollywood songs on the performance of various customs and rituals, for instance, the villagers sing *bhajans* to the tune of popular romantic songs of Bollywood films (*Kar de Ma, Kar de Ma, Kalyan Kar de Ma*). Unlike the novella, Binya has a much older brother who is a local wrestler and someone who inspires fear and awe in Nandu.

In a manner similar to Ruskin Bond’s Ram Bharosa, Nandu takes the treasured possessions of children when they cannot pay him back for the things they have bought from him. In an interview Kapur spoke of his desire to portray different characters instead of portraying himself, which explains the chameleon like quality that he possesses.

The blue umbrella is shown in the film through Binya’s perspective. We see her looking at something -the shaky camera shows her surprise and befuddlement and then focuses on the beautiful object of her attention. Through close ups we see the umbrella in all its glory. The visual medium lends a certain tangibility and verisimilitude to the blue umbrella. When Binya touches the umbrella, the audience experiences a sensation similar to hers. It is a child’s delight at

discovering a beautiful object. In another song it is described as “*Ambar ka tukdatoda/lakdi ka hattajoda/haath mein apne aasman hai*” (“Stole a piece of heaven/Dressed it up in wood/I now clasp the sky in my hands”).

It is a group of Japanese tourists who replace the Indian holidaymakers of the novella. Bhardwaj refrains from making the comparison between city dwellers and village folk that Ruskin Bond hints at. A film which is made for primarily an Indian audience refuses to offer a scathing criticism of fellow Indians that Bond offers, by laying the blame at the door of foreign tourists.

The film uses many binocular POVs, where either Ram Bharosa or Nandu use Tikku’s binoculars to look at Binya and her umbrella. Bhardwaj indicates the way Nandu has managed to acquire the binoculars, and that is how he would make an attempt to procure the umbrella as well. Through a wide shot we see how he makes the bus stop in the middle of the road when he sees Binya with her umbrella under a waterfall. He offers her fifty rupees and a bunch of balloons. The shot where she goes away with her umbrella, we see a wide shot with Nandu letting go of the balloons in his disappointment, with just the sound of the waterfall in the background, is visually and emotionally one of the most moving scenes in the film which make the audience pity and empathise with this old man and his inexplicable desire for the blue umbrella. Bhardwaj probably changed the name of the character to make it rhyme with *chhatri* (umbrella) as Nandu says, “*Kuch pich le janam ka rishtahai chhatri or khatri ka*” (There is some connection of a previous birth between Nandu and the blue umbrella).

The montage that depicts Binya’s battle with a venomous snake indicates how Bhardwaj is urging his audience to see her as Rani of Jhansi - a fierce, formidable warrior who is often set as an example to be emulated by young girls. There are mythological analogies as well, for instance the sight of an effigy of *Ravana* reminds her of *Khatri* and makes Binya suspect him of stealing her umbrella. She gets his tea shop inspected by a local police officer. In this scene, the sympathy of the audience is with Nandu who is falsely accused of stealing an umbrella. He takes a pledge that he would not touch pickle till the time he receives his umbrella. When he finally receives it, there is a repetition of the scenes of joy and celebration that we witnessed when Binya found the blue umbrella, the only difference being that it is Nandu who becomes the centre of this delight and awe. Binya launches her own investigation and discovers how her umbrella was stolen and dyed red. It is an instance of tragic irony that the moment when Nandu is talking of his struggles, the umbrella loses its acquired color in the rain. He is banished from the village and turned into a *pariah*.

As against Ruskin Bond’s novella which ends in October, it is in a snow clad winter in which the last scenes of the film are set. The atmosphere heightens the existential loneliness and alienation of Nandu. We see him trying to stop buses in order to get customers, all the while muttering to himself! The wide shot of Nandu throwing snowballs at the children, who shout, “*Nand Kishore, Chhatri Chor*” (Nandi Kishore is an umbrella thief) is seen through Binya’s perspective, thus, making us realise the remorse she felt about what she has inadvertently caused and done. The helplessness and vulnerability of this old man who is left to his own devices is also indicated in the scene where a bear climbs on top of his roof and Nandu struggles to hide in a corner of his hut to save himself. The cinematography is strongly reminiscent of another film by Vishal Bhardwaj, *Haider* which was set in Kashmir. When the wedding procession of the village

chief's son crosses Nandu's shop, he attempts to become a part of the celebration but he is again ridiculed and humiliated for his crime. The movement of the camera, initially showing the wedding procession crossing Nandu's shop and then moving away from Nandu, depicting his desertion by those he once held dear. When Binya leaves the umbrella at the counter for him, he tries to break it, burn it and destroy the thing that has caused him so much pain and suffering. The scene not only shows human frailties, it does not allow us to assume a superior moral position with regard to Nandu. He later tries to return the umbrella to Binya but she gives it to him, "by chance", repeating his *takia kalam* (catchphrase) and we see another extreme wide shot - but this time of Nandu and his blue and red umbrella. The film ends with the renaming of the Khatri stall to Chhatri stall.

As against the adaptation of a novel that requires pruning, a short story and novella demand an elaboration of incident and character. Bhardwaj does both in his film by making Nandu a well delineated and nuanced character. He achieves this by choosing an actor like Pankaj Kapur whose portrayal of Nandu makes this film, Nandu's story instead of Binya's. Bhardwaj also adds scenes such as Nandu going to the bazaar to buy an umbrella, stealing Binya's umbrella and dyeing it red, being the guest of honour at the village wrestling match etc. Although Ruskin Bond and Vishal Bhardwaj who are also neighbors in Landour, are very similar in their love for mountains and understanding of greed, desire, loneliness and remorse, Bhardwaj's film lends a visual splendour to Ruskin Bond's tale and makes it as much his, as Bond's. According to **Rajeev Masand**, despite its "fable like simplicity", it is a "heartwarming story for adults, something to take you back to your childhood" which has a picture postcard cinematography by **Sachin Krishnan**.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) How does the language of cinema convey meaning?

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4.4 LET US SUM UP

Ruskin Bond and Vishal Bhardwaj are adept at evocatively depicting life in the hills and the conflicted nature of human beings. A close analysis of the film and the novella indicates how the medium of cinema with its need to keep the audience hooked for long periods of time, requires greater suspense and drama which Bhardwaj's adaptation provides. It also makes Bond's Ram Bharosa a more likeable character because of the performance of Pankaj Kapur. The various devices and the language of cinema creates, a visual spectacle which draws upon Ruskin Bond's story, adding stories about the *Rani of Jhansi* and other myths enthralls the audience and leaves an indelible memory of Ruskin Bond's story.

4.5 QUESTIONS

- 1) Ruskin Bond and Vishal Bhardwaj's *The Blue Umbrella* is a children's story for adults. Do you agree?
- 2) In the adaptation of a short story and novella, the adaptor has to add incident and characters. Discuss with reference to *The Blue Umbrella*.

4.6 HINTS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) It is a short tale in prose, longer than a short story and shorter than a novel. Ruskin Bond's *The Blue Umbrella* is concentrated in its focus on the passion, desire, envy and later isolation created by the blue umbrella.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Shot, camera movements, montage (the way shots are arranged in a sequence), mis-en-scene (arrangement of actors, props, setting before the camera), music, use of colors comprises the language of cinema. In the film, for instance the extreme close ups of the umbrella being touched by Binya indicates her fascination with the blue umbrella.

Hints to Longer Questions

- 1) *The Blue Umbrella* is intended for both children and adults or as Bhardwaj pointed out, "a children's film for adults." Like children's narratives, it does convey something but does it in a nuanced and complex manner which would be appreciated by adults. It concentrates on the world of Binya and other children but it shows the thin line of difference separating children from adults.
- 2) Since a film is a longer narrative which intends to hold the attention of the audience for a few hours, elaboration of incident and character is required in case of an adaptation of a short story and novella. The film adds suspense and drama by including a subplot in which Nandu steals the umbrella, dyes it red and is exposed when he is invited as a guest to the village wrestling match. Music is another dimension which is added to entertain the audience and take the story forward. The story of Rani of Jhansi and Nandu's comparison with Ravana also adds more layers to the narrative.

4.7 GLOSSARY

Alfred Edgar Coppard : (1878 – 1957) was an English writer and poet, noted for his influence on the short story form.

Bashir Badr : (born Syed Muhammad Bashir in 1935) is an Indian Urdu poet. Badr was born in Faizabad, and is an alumnus of Aligarh Muslim University. He is currently suffering from dementia and doesn't seem to remember his Mushaira years. Badr has written many Urdu ghazals. He has also worked as a chairman of the Urdu Academy. Badr has received the Padma Shri award in 1999 for his contribution to

literature and the Sangeet Natak Akademi. He has also received the Sahitya Akademi Award in Urdu for his poetry collection "Aas" in 1999. Badr is one of the most quoted shayar in Indian pop-culture.

Charan Singh

- : Charan Singh was born in 1964. He is a writer whose stories are as shocking, sharp and harsh as the "firecracker" in his trailer. In 1998, he came into the limelight with his story 'Bakkhad' which received the Navjyoti Katha award. He has three anthologies to his credit with ten stories each - "Baat Yeh Nahin Hai" (2005), "PeepalKePhool" (2010) and "Goru's Laptop and Gorky Ki Buffalo" (2014). Several of his stories have been adapted to films such as "Butcher", "Patakha", based on "Do Sisters", earlier named "Churriyans". C R Mandy was the former editor of The Illustrated Weekly of India.

Ebenezer Scrooge

- : Ebenezer Scrooge is the protagonist of Charles Dickens' 1843 novella, A Christmas Carol. At the beginning of the novella, Scrooge is a cold-hearted miser who despises Christmas. The tale of his redemption by three spirits (the Ghost of Christmas Past, the Ghost of Christmas Present, and the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come) has become a defining tale of the Christmas holiday in the English-speaking world. Dickens describes Scrooge thus early in the story: "The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shrivelled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue; and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice." Towards the end of the novella, Scrooge is transformed by the spirits into a better person who changed his ways to become more friendly and less miserly. Scrooge's last name has come into the English language as a byword for stinginess and misanthropy, while his catchphrase, "Bah! Humbug!" is often used to express disgust with many modern Christmas traditions.

Extreme wide shot

- : camera shows the silhouette of the subject and his/her surroundings. The purpose is to establish where the subject is.

Faiz Ahmed Faiz

- : Faiz Ahmad Faiz (1911 – 84) was a Pakistani Marxist, poet, and an author. He is one of the most celebrated writers of the Urdu language in Pakistan. He is described as "a man of wide experience, "having been a teacher, an army officer, a journalist, a trade unionist and a broadcaster. Faiz was nominated for Nobel Prize in Literature and won the Lenin Peace Prize. Faiz's literary work was posthumously publicly honoured when the Pakistan Government conferred upon him the nation's highest civil award, Nishan-

Femme Fatale

: Seductive, scheming woman

Ghazal

: The ghazal is a form of amatory poem or ode, originating in Arabic poetry. A ghazal may be understood as a poetic expression of both the pain of loss or separation and the beauty of love in spite of that pain. The ghazal form is ancient, tracing its origins to 7th-century Arabic poetry. The ghazal spread into South Asia in the 12th century due to the influence of Sufi mystics and the courts of the new Islamic Sultanate, and is now most prominently a form of poetry of many languages of the Indian subcontinent and Turkey. A ghazal commonly consists of five to fifteen couplets, which are independent, but are linked – abstractly, in their theme; and more strictly in their poetic form. The structural requirements of the ghazal are similar in stringency to those of the Petrarchan sonnet. In style and content, due to its highly allusive nature, the ghazal has proved capable of an extraordinary variety of expression around its central themes of love and separation.

Gulzar

: Sampooran Singh Kalra (born 18 August 1934). He started his career with music director S.D. Burman as a lyricist in the 1963 film Bandini and worked with many music directors including R. D. Burman, Salil Chowdhury, Vishal Bhardwaj and A. R. Rahman. He was awarded Padma Bhushan in 2004, the Sahitya Akademi Award and the Dadasaheb Phalke Award—the highest award in Indian cinema. He has won several Indian National Film Awards, 21 Filmfare Awards, one Academy Award and one Grammy Award.

**Sir Hugh Seymour
Walpole**

: (1884 – 1941) was an English novelist. He was the son of an Anglican clergyman, intended for a career in the church but drawn instead to writing. Among those who encouraged him were the authors Henry James and Arnold Bennett. His skill at scene-setting and vivid plots, as well as his high profile as a lecturer, brought him a large readership in the United Kingdom and North America. He was a best-selling author in the 1920s and 1930s but has been largely neglected since his death.

**Herbert Ernest Bates
CBE**

: (1905 –1974), better known as H. E. Bates, was an English writer and author. His best-known works include Love for Lydia, The Darling Buds of May, and My Uncle Silas.

John Llewellyn Rhys Prize : The John Llewellyn Rhys Prize was a literary prize awarded annually for the best work of literature (fiction, non-fiction, poetry, drama) by an author from the Commonwealth aged 35 or under, written in English and published in the United Kingdom. Established in 1942, it is one of the oldest literary awards in the UK. Since 2011 the award has been suspended due to funding problems. The last award was in 2010.

Khalid Mohamed : Khalid Mohamed is an Indian journalist, editor, film critic, writer and film director. He formerly worked for the Hindustan Times and was the lead editor for Filmfare magazine. He is the son of Hindi film actress Zubeida Begum, on whose life he wrote the screenplay of Shyam Benegal's 2001 film, *Zubeidaa*. Mohamed has directed four Hindi films.

Matthew Robbins : (born in 1945) is an American screenwriter and film director best known for his work within the American New Wave movement. He collaborated with numerous filmmakers within the movement including George Lucas, Guillermo del Toro, Walter Murch and Steven Spielberg, on films like *The Sugarland Express*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, and *Jaws*. Robbins frequently worked with writer Hal Barwood. In 2014, he made his debut in Indian cinema by penning the screenplay for the Bollywood thriller *7 Khoon Maaf*, along with Vishal Bhardwaj. His second Indian film *Rangoon*, was helmed by the same director.

Pankaj Kapoor : (born 1954) is an Indian theatre, television and film actor. He is the father of actor Shahid Kapoor with his first wife, Neelima Azeem. He has appeared in several television serials and films. His most acclaimed film roles to date have been that of Inspector P K in *Raakh* (1989), Dr Dipankar Roy in *Ek Doctor Ki Maut* (1991) and Abba ji, (based on Shakespeare's *King Duncan*) in Vishal Bhardwaj's adaptation of *Macbeth*; *Maqbool* (2004), all three roles which got him National Film Awards.

Priyanka Chopra Jonas: (born in 1982) is an Indian actress and singer. She was the winner of the Miss World 2000 pageant, and is one of India's highest-paid and most popular entertainers. Chopra has received numerous accolades, including a National Film Award and five Filmfare Awards. In 2016, the Government of India honoured her with the Padma Shri and Time named her one of the 100 most influential people in the world, and in the next two years Forbes listed her among the World's 100 Most Powerful Women. Following a brief setback, she garnered success in

2008 for playing a troubled model in the drama *Fashion*, which won her the National Film Award for Best Actress, and a glamorous journalist in *Dostana*. Chopra gained wider recognition for portraying a range of characters in the films *Kaminey* (2009), *7 Khoon Maaf* (2011), *Barfi!* (2012), *Mary Kom* (2014), and *Bajirao Mastani* (2015). From 2015 to 2018, she starred as Alex Parrish in the ABC thriller series *Quantico*. Chopra has since played supporting roles in the Hollywood comedies *Baywatch* (2017) and *Isn't It Romantic* (2019), and returned to Hindi cinema with a leading role in the biopic *The Sky Is Pink* (2019).

POV

- : A shot from the point of view of a character, making the audience see something from a character's perspective

Rajeev Masand

- : Rajeev Masand is an Indian film critic. He works for Noida based English language news channel CNN-Indian Broadcasting Network (CNN-IBN). He usually reviews Bollywood films and major Hollywood films released in India in his weekend show *Now Showing*.

Rasipuram Krishnaswami Iyer

- : (1906 –2001), was an Indian writer known for his work set in Narayanaswami: the fictional South Indian town of Malgudi. He was a leading author of early Indian literature in English along with Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao. Narayan's mentor and friend Graham Greene was instrumental in getting publishers for Narayan's first four books including the semi-autobiographical trilogy of *Swami and Friends*, *The Bachelor of Arts* and *The English Teacher*. The fictional town of Malgudi was first introduced in *Swami and Friends*. Narayan's *The Financial Expert* was hailed as one of the most original works of 1951 and Sahitya Academy Award winner *The Guide* was adapted for film (winning a Filmfare Award for Best Film) and for Broadway.

Sachin Kumar Krishnan: Sachin Kumar Krishnan is an Indian cinematographer who works with the Bollywood Film Industry. Sachin is also a director of photography by profession. He did movies like *Saab* (2017), *Rajneeti* (2010), *Satyagraha* (2013), *Chakravyuh* (2012), *Aarakshan* (2011), *Yeh Saali Zindagi* (2011), *The Blue Umbrella* (2005), *Khoya Khoya Chand* (2007), *Vaastu Shashtra* (2004). Sachin was nominated for the Guild Award under the category of Best Cinematographer in 2016.

Shabana Azmi

- : (1950) is an Indian actress of film, television and theatre. The daughter of poet Kaifi Azmi and stage actress Shaukat Azmi, she is an alumna of Film and

Television Institute of India of Pune. Azmi made her film debut in 1974 and soon became one of the leading actresses of Parallel Cinema, a new-wave movement known for its serious content and neorealism and received government patronage during the times. Regarded as one of the finest actresses in India, Azmi's performances in films in a variety of genres have generally earned her praise and awards, which include a record of five wins of the National Film Award for Best Actress and several international honour. She has also received five Filmfare Awards, and was honoured among "women in cinema" at the 30th International Film Festival of India. In 1988, the Government of India awarded her with Padma Shri, the fourth highest civilian honour of the country.

Shashi Kapoor

: Shashi Kapoor (1938 – 2017) was an Indian actor and film producer. Recipient of several accolades, including four National Film Awards and two Filmfare Awards, Kapoor predominantly worked in Hindi films. He also featured in a number of English-language films produced by Merchant-Ivory. For his contributions to film, the Government of India honored him with the Padma Bhushan in 2011, and the Dadasaheb Phalke Award in 2014. Born into the Kapoor family, Kapoor was the third and youngest son of Prithviraj Kapoor.

Shweta Basu Prasad

: (1991) is an Indian film actress. She started her career as a child actress in Hindi films and television series and went on to play lead roles in Bengali, Telugu and Tamil cinema. For her performance in the 2002 film *Makdee*, she won the National Film Award for Best Child Artist.

Shyam Benegal

: Shyam Benegal (1934) is an Indian director and screenwriter. With his first four feature films *Ankur* (1973), *Nishant* (1975), *Manthan* (1976) and *Bhumika* (1977) he was part of a new genre, which is now called "middle cinema" in India. He prefers his work to be called New or Alternate cinema. Benegal was awarded the Padma Shri in 1976 and the Padma Bhushan in 1991. On 8 August 2007, Benegal was awarded the highest award in Indian cinema for lifetime achievement, the Dadasaheb Phalke Award for the year 2005. He has won the National Film Award for Best Feature Film in Hindi seven times. He was awarded the V. Shantaram Lifetime Achievement Award at the 2018 Mumbai International Film Festival.

Wide shot

: A shot that shows the character and his/her surroundings.

William Henry Gates III: (born 1955) is an American business magnate, software developer, investor, and philanthropist. He is best known as the co-founder of Microsoft Corporation. During his career at Microsoft, Gates held the positions of chairman, chief executive officer (CEO), president and chief software architect, while also being the largest individual shareholder until May 2014. He is one of the best-known entrepreneurs and pioneers of the microcomputer revolution of the 1970s and 1980s.

William Saroyan : (1908 –1981) was an Armenian-American novelist, playwright, and short story writer. He was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1940, and in 1943 won the Academy Award for Best Story for the film adaptation of his novel *The Human Comedy*. Saroyan wrote extensively about the Armenian immigrant life in California. Many of his stories and plays are set in his native Fresno. Some of his best-known works are *The Time of Your Life*, *My Name Is Aram* and *My Heart's in the Highlands*.

Yash Bharti Award : The Yash Bharti Award is the highest Award of Government of Uttar Pradesh, Instituted in 1994, it is awarded to those personalities whose contribution is remarkable in the field of literature, social work, medicine, film, science, journalism, handicrafts, culture, education, music, drama, sports, industry and astrology.

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MPDD/IGNOU/P.O. 8K/January, 2021



ISBN : 978-93-90773-07-7