

## **The Guide: Adaptation from Novel to Film**

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### **Abstract**

Adaptation in the film industry is nothing new. Almost three-fourths of all films ever made have been adapted from novels, plays or short stories of the classic literature in every language. Our Indian film industry is of no exception. It is often said that the printed text is, in some way, superior to and more moral than the filmed version. The objective of this paper is to focus on such adaptation – the adaptation of R.K.Narayan's Sahitya Akademi Award winning novel *The Guide* to Vijay Anand's film *Guide*. After the release of the film Narayan was very unhappy because he felt that it could not capture the spirit of the story, and he did not like the unwarranted cuts and changes. This is true from the aesthetic view point, but it is equally true that a film director is not bound to the original and he or she has every right to eliminate or add some characters and incidents which are or are not there in the original text in order to cater the taste of all sorts of public. In the process of adaptation every film director recreates or gives new dimension to the original. The humble attempt in this paper is to trace the changes made by Vijay Anand and to show how these changes made the film a grand success and received several awards and recognition in spite of Narayan's strong dislike.

### **Keywords**

adaptation, film industry, infidelity, guide, *sadhu*

John Harrington in his book *Film And /As Literature*(1977) estimates that one third of all films ever made has been adapted from novels and if we include other literary genres, such as drama or short story, that estimate will be sixty-five percent or more. Nearly all of the works of classic literature in every language have been adapted for films – some, many times and in multiple languages, settings and formats. For example, *Sherlock Holmes* (1887), the world famous detective fiction by Arthur Conan Doyle, has more than two hundred film versions – from a silent movie made in 1916 by William Gillette to Steven Moffat and Mark Gattis’s startling 2010 reinvention of Sherlock starring Benedict Cumberbatch. There are nearly fifty film versions of William Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* (1594) – from a 1900 French version called *Romeo et Juliette* to the 2011 animated American film *Gnomeo and Juliet*.

Our Indian film industry is not an exception of this. From the beginning till date it has been showing endless super-duper hit films adapted from famous novels or plays or short stories of different regional writers, of Indian English writers and of some foreign writers. *Devdas*(1917), a Bengali novel by Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay has been made into film not only in many languages including Bengali, Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Urdu, Assamese and Malayalam, but also at several times in the same language: in Bengali it has been picturized five times – in 1935 by P.C.Barua, in 1979 by Dilip Roy, in 1982 by Chashi Nazrul Islam, in 2002 by Shakti Samanta and in 2013 as a Bangladeshi film again by Chashi Nazrul Islam; in Hindi for four times – in 1936 by P.C.Baura, in 1955 by Bimal Roy, in 2002 by Sanjay Leela Bhansali and in 2009 as *Dev. D* by Anurag Kashyap; in Telugu for two times – in 1953 by Vedantam Raghavaiah, and in 1974 as *Devadasu* by Vijay Nirmala; in Urdu in 1965 by Khawaja Sarfaraj; in Assamese in 1937 once again by P.C.Barua; and in Malayalam as *Devadas* by Cross Belt Mani in 1989. This single novel of Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay shows how Indian film makers adapt novels.

The objective of this paper is to focus on such an adaptation – the adaptation of the distinguished Indian English writer R.K.Narayan’s soul stirring English novel *The Guide* (1958) for the Hindi film *Guide* (1965), which is remembered for its brilliant direction by Vijay Anand, exceptional music by Sachin Dev Burman, and finally for the outstanding performance by Dev Anand and Waheeda Rehman. The enormous literary success of the novel, which won the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1961, brought offers of a Broadway

dramatization in New York and two film versions produced by Dev Anand in Hindi and Pearl Buck and Ted Danielewski in English, all of which made Narayan acutely unhappy since he felt that none of them captured the spirit of the story, and he did not like the unwarranted cuts and changes. This is true from the aesthetic view point but it is equally true that a film director cannot afford to present the entire novel into his or her film version; he or she has to select some of the most important aspects of the text so as to present the essence of it to the audience. A film director is not bound to the original and he or she has every right to eliminate or add some characters and incidents which are or are not there in the original text in order to cater the taste of all sorts of public. In the process of adaptation every film director recreates or gives new dimension to the original. The naïve and humble attempt in this paper is to trace the changes made by Vijay Anand and to show how these changes made the film a grand success and received several awards and recognition in spite of Narayan's strong dislike.

## II

Vijay Anand's Hindi film *Guide* is a path breaking cinematic experience and is perhaps one of the milestone films of the Indian cinema. The film boldly presents before us the taboo subjects of extra marital relation when infidelity was considered a forbidden subject in India. The film is one of the earliest efforts in the Indian film industry to depict both the hero and the heroine in the negative shade.

Dev Anand, the ever green actor and filmmaker plays the role of Raju, a fast-talking, self-promoting tourist guide in the Rajasthani city of Udaipur. The movie starts from the middle of the story with Raju being released from jail and then the story runs in flashback. Once a wealthy and aged archaeologist named Marco (Kishore Sahu) and his young and good looking wife Rosie (Waheeda Rehman) come to Raju's city. Marco's main purpose of coming here is to do some research in the caves on the outskirts of the city and he hires Raju as his guide. While Marco devotes himself to the discovery of caves, Raju takes Rosie on a tour to a village to show her dance of King Cobra and there she begins to dance with the Cobra. Raju is captivated by the impetuous beauty and amazing dancing skill of Rosie. Raju learns about Rosie's background that she is the daughter of a *devdasi*, the temple dancer, and

how she has become the wife of Marco. But Marco does not like Rosie's dancing in his house, so Rosie has to give up her passion of dancing.

Meanwhile, Marco is totally engrossed in his work in the cave and ignores Rosie. As a result Rosie tries to commit suicide by consuming poison. Upon knowing the incident Marco returns from the cave to see Rosie but he gets furious when he sees Rosie fit and alive. He accuses Rosie that her act of committing suicide was actually a drama; otherwise she would have consumed more poison. In this way their relationship is getting worse and Rosie again attempts to end her life when she finds Marco having an affair with a native girl in the cave. But Raju saves her from committing suicide and inspires her to live in order to fulfil her dream – to become a dancer. She finally comes out of the relation of being the wife of Marco and it is here that Raju takes her to his home. But this turns Raju's family, friends and the entire community against him. However, Raju develops love for Rosie and he helps Rosie to embark on a dancing career and Rosie becomes Nalini, a superstar.

Rosie starts arranging a number of dance shows and earns a lot of money. As fame and wealth come in, Raju becomes addicted to gambling and drinking. He finds happiness in the luxurious and materialistic life but Rosie is not happy with money and aristocratic lifestyle. Moreover, too many dance shows consume her passion for dance and she starts feeling exhausted. One day, a parcel comes from Marco who sends a copy of his book, *The Cultural History of South India*, in which he writes about his discovery of the new cave and acknowledges, as he made the promise, that it is Raju, a local guide who helps him in his work. Raju keeps the book out of the reach of Rosie. Within few days another thing happens – Marco comes to visit Rosie but Raju does not permit Marco to meet Rosie. One day a bank representative comes to Raju and informs him about a joint account that is in the name of Marco and Rosie. Now Marco desires to close the account and wants to have the jewellery released. The bank representative also tells Raju that the bank is handing over the jewellery to Rosie on Marco's wish, so the bank needs Rosie's signature. All these make Raju feel jealous and he does not want Marco to have any sort of contact with Rosie. Raju, who loves Rosie, also fears of losing her. Hence, he forges Rosie's signature. As a result he is sentenced to two years imprisonment.

On the day of his release from the jail Raju's mother (Leela Chitnis) and Rosie come to pick him up but they are told that Raju was released six months ago because of his good

behaviour in the jail. After being released from the jail Raju decides not to go back either to Rosie or to his mother. He keeps wanderings alone until he finds a group of *sadhus* with whom he spends a night at a derelict temple in a small village called Rampuri. The next morning, a farmer named Bhola (Gajanan Jagirdar) finds Raju sleeping under the orange shawl, which one of the *sadhus* places upon him last night. Bhola thinks Raju as a holy man and calls him “Swami Ji”. Bhola tells Raju that he is having a problem with his sister Maya as she refuses to marry. Bhola requests Raju to do something. Raju tells Bhola to bring Maya to him and he convinces Maya. Inspired by this, Bhola spreads the news in the village and Raju is taken as a holy man by all the villagers. They bring foods and gifts for him and tell their problems. Raju opens a school at the village, solves other problems and is living happily with the villagers. One day, while sharing his childhood stories with the villagers Raju tells the story of a holy man who saved a draught ridden village by fasting twelve days.

Ironically, after few days a draught and ensuing famine hit the village. Through the miscommunication of a village fool, Raju’s words – that he will not eat anything until the villagers stop fighting in such a hard time – are interpreted by the villagers that he will fast for twelve days to bring rain, like the holy man of his earlier story. Thus Raju is trapped by his own words. At first Raju opposes the idea and tells Bhola that there is no connection between one’s fasting and the rain. He also tells Bhola that he is just an ordinary human being like anyone of them or even worse – a convict who has undergone trial and jail for forgery. But this confession makes Bhola to accept Raju as a holy man more strongly and Bhola alludes to the story of the dacoit Ratnakar who became Valmiki. So Raju reluctantly begins to fast by seeing the indisputable faith of the villagers. With the fast there occurs in Raju a spiritual transformation. As the fast goes on Raju’s fame spreads on, people from other places come to see him and to take his blessing. Meanwhile, an American news reporter comes to broadcast the whole thing. The reporter asks Raju whether he truly believes that the fast would bring rain. Raju gives a very smart answer by saying, “There people have faith in me and I have faith in their faith”.

Gradually Rosie, Raju’s mother and Gaffur, his friend and taxi driver come to see whether this “Swami Ji” and their Raju is the same person. In this way Raju gets back everyone whom he has lost a long time ago. But now he is caught between the two – on the one side a chance to get back his past life and on the other side there are thousands of people

with their faith in him to bring rain and save their lives. His health starts falling and he thinks about the meaning of his life. He gets enlightened by the concept that his past sins are washed away by this torment. In this way the earlier Raju he knew has died and now the only thing that remains is the spiritual guide, which is not subjected to death. All the people irrespective of religion begin to pray to the Almighty to send rain in the earth. Finally rain comes and the crowd rejoices but Rosie finds Raju dead and she begins to shed tears. Raju transcends himself from a simple tourist guide to the spiritual guide of humanity.

### III

Converting a novel into a screenplay is not just a matter of culling dialogues from the pages of the novel. A film director has to keep many things in his mind, such as – how to compress the matter of a novel usually comprising of more than three hundred pages into three hours or so, how faithful to the original work should the film version strive to be, what are the things to be eliminated from the original text and what new be added, how the audience take the film version of a popular text and so on.

The first and most important issue for a filmmaker or screenwriter is that no matter what the length of the original is, the film version must not go beyond three hours or so. For example, the 2002 adaptation of Dickens's *David Copperfield* (1849 – 50) compresses the novel of eight hundred pages into one hundred and eighty minutes. Vijay Anand's *Guide* takes one hundred and seventy minutes to present Narayan's story of two hundred and forty seven pages. This is not an easy task as condensation results in the omission of materials from the novel which the novelist apparently considers to be essential to his or her original conception. The reduction of a long work to a comparatively short film requires many omissions. Lester Asheim in "From Book to Film: Summary" opines, "The necessity to a comparatively short film play requires many omissions. The necessity to condense, however, dictates only that something must be eliminated, but does not prescribe what that something shall be"(260). So the script writer should exclude carefully only the events or characters that are not essential to the new presentation or that do not hamper the plot for their omissions. In his Hindi film *Guide* Vijay Anand excluded the whole childhood days of Raju which is described vividly by Narayan in his novel. Through the childhood days of Raju, Narayan presents the socio-political, cultural as well as economic conditions of India of the 1950s or

1960s, such as – the life before and after the advent of railways in Narayan’s fictional town Malgudi having the typical milieu of the then India, the life in the *pyol* school, the impact of urbanization upon the village life etc. which are totally absent in the film. Also the film does not present the picture of the world inside the jail and life style of the prisoners. Narayan is not only famous for his minute observation but also for his use of humour that can be beautifully traced in the conversation between Raju and the barber outside the jail. These events are omitted in the film version primarily because they do not further the plot nor their omission hampers the plot.

The filmmaker not only eliminates some incidents from the original, but also makes some major changes while adapting his film from a novel and here comes the question of the filmmaker’s fidelity to the original text. In *Reading the Movie* (1957), William Costanzo quotes George Blueston, one of the first critics to study film adaptation of literature. Blueston believes that filmmaker is an independent artist, “not a translator for an established author, but a new author in his own right” (62). What actually a filmmaker does is to refashion the spirit of the story with his or her own vision and tools.

There are some reasons behind the changing of some of the events of the original text. The first reason is simply because the changes demanded by a new medium. Film and literature have their own tools for manipulating narrative structure. In a novel a new chapter may take us back to a different time and place in a narrative, where as in a film we may go back to the same time and place through the use of various techniques like flashback, crosscut or dissolve. Vijay Anand does the same thing in *Guide* by employing these techniques to make the complex narrative of Narayan coherent. Narayan starts his novel with *in-medias-res* and then goes back to the past and frequently changes the time frame from present to past and past to present which makes his narrative too complex. *The Guide* is his only novel which has such a complex narrative structure which makes the reader puzzled. Though the film begins, like the novel, from the middle of the story and then harks back to the past, it avoids the frequent shifting of time frame like that of the novel. Instead, the film shows a simple, clear cut and coherent narration. The “unity of action” is observed more closely on the screen than in the text. It helps the audience to understand the story more easily and clearly than the novel.

Lester Ascheim points out that the “narrative viewpoint is consistently omniscient and usually impersonal in the film adaptations, regardless of the viewpoint employed by the novelist” (262). As a result, the intention of the author as personal commentator on the action or theme in a novel is almost absent in a film. In Narayan’s novel the story is narrated sometimes from the viewpoint of Raju, sometimes from that of Rosie or sometimes authorial narrator intrudes into the story to remind us about the present situation and comment on the characters’ morality. But in the film the authorial intrusion is completely absent and mostly the film is shown from the omniscient or impersonal perspective. The objective omniscience of the camera eye makes the services of an interpreter unnecessary. While the reader of a novel is free to interpret any events or actions or comments of the characters, the spectator of a film is a passive consumer of the actions as they occur before his or her eyes. Film does not allow us to get the same freedom as a novel does – to interact with the plot or characters by imagining them in our mind. For some people, this is often the most frustrating aspect of turning a novel into film.

Often filmmakers make changes to highlight new themes, emphasise different traits in a character or even try to solve problems they perceive in the original work. Allan Cubbit, who wrote the screenplay for the 2001 film *Anna Karenina*, says in an interview that he always felt Vronsky’s suicide attempt was “under motivated” and therefore he tried to strengthen the character’s sense of rejection and humiliation in the film version. In his novel, Narayan presents the major characters – Raju, Rosie and Marco – not as the ‘flat characters’ but as complex and conflicting. Both the novel and the film present Raju, Rosie and Marco not as the typical hero, heroine and villain, rather a mixture of all qualities in each of them.

The hero, Raju in the film is seen as falling in love with Rosie particularly after saving Rosie from committing suicide as she is totally frustrated with Marco, her eccentric husband, who values his work more than his wife and she wants to come out from the relationship. Finally Rosie does so and this prompts Raju to take her and give her a shelter. He has both sympathy and love for Rosie. Raju has already admired Rosie’s dance and in this critical situation stretches his helping hands and calms her by saying that committing suicide is a sin and she should live to pursue her dream – to become a famous dancer. This is how they come close to each other and develop their love. But in the novel Raju develops his love and passion for Rosie much before. In spite of being well aware of the fact that Rosie is a



married woman Raju goes on loving with her by ignoring the warnings of his mother, his maternal uncle and Gaffur. This negative shade in the character of Raju is shown in the film in a polished way: “Where Narayan’s Raju takes the first opportunity to worm himself into Rosie’s bedroom, the ‘reel’ Raju is unfailingly noble never taking physical advantage of a damsel in distress” (Bhattacharya 93).

The character of Rosie, like that of Raju, in the film is presented in such a way that we cannot claim that Rosie is infidel to her husband Marco. Vijay Anand consciously introduces a new scene in the film where Marco is seen as having a physical relationship with a native girl in the cave, which is not there in the novel. Rosie rejects Marco only after seeing this. She accepts Raju because in Raju she finds the loving and caring nature which is not there in Marco and also because it is Raju who supports her to pursue her dream of becoming a successful dancer. This is why in spite of being married Rosie lives with Raju. Vijay Anand makes the characters of Raju and Rosie in such a way that the audience feel pity for them. We may say that they are more sinned against than sinning.

The role of Marco, according to Dr. Nandini Bhattacharya, is also significantly enacted by Kishor Sahu, an established ‘villain’ of Bollywood in the 1960s, thereby making impression in the audience’s mind about Marco’s irredeemable ‘badness’. In *R.K.Narayan’s The Guide: New Critical Perspectives* (2004), she further comments:

... unlike the academic, and inscrutable Marco of the printed text, the ‘reel’ Marco surreptitiously drinks alcohol in the caves, and maintains illicit relationship with prostitutes, thereby forcing Rosie, as it were, to take the final and irrevocable step of leaving him for another man ( 93 ).

Sometimes it is seen that the filmmaker shifts the setting of the original novel from which the film is adapted, as it happens in the case of *Guide*. Narayan regretted that by shifting the scene away from Malgudi, an imaginary small town in a conservative part of South India to Jaipur, Rajasthan – in the north of India, the subtleties of the story had been levelled down completely – “By abolishing Malgudi, they had discarded my own value in milieu and human characteristics” (Narayan 171). It is true that the change of the setting naturally makes for alterations in the characterization, the values which motivate characters and even the plot:

Narayan's Rosie, for instance, is part of a traditional and orthodox South Indian society, and an exponent of the strictly classical tradition of the Bharat Natyam, where the dancer actually performs an act of worship to Lord Shiva Nataraja through the dance. All these factors determine her character and her actions in the novel. By contrast, Wahida Rehman's Rosie is far more cosmopolitan – she performs dances which are typical Bollywood extravaganzas “in deliciously fruity colours and costumes”... This was obviously done to cater to the average Bombay film audience who might find Narayan's Rosie too serious and complex for their taste (Sen 6).

However, the most discussed portion of the film is the ending which presents the twelve day fasting of Raju in order to bring rain to the draught ridden village Rampuri. During this period Raju gets back his mother and Rosie and there is reconciliation among them. Finally rain comes and Raju dies. This is how the movie ends but the novel has an open ending and is ambiguous. It ends with Raju being staged down with his final words – “Velan, it's raining in the hills. I can feel it coming up under my feet, up my legs - ”(Narayan, *The Guide* 247). We are not told whether Raju dies or the rain comes. Regarding this change in the film Narayan, in his autobiography *My Days* (1974), expresses his dissatisfaction:

The most outrageous part of it was the last scene, in which an elaborate funeral and prolonged lamentation were added at short notice in order to placate eleven financiers who saw the final copy of the film tightly clutching the money bags and would not part with the cash unless a satisfactory mourning scene was added (174-5).

From the literary viewpoint it is true that the film's ending destroys the spirit of the novel but we cannot forget the fact that Vijay Anand ends the film in this way in order to fulfil the demand of his audience. Years later, in his tribute to Narayan after his death in 2001, Dev Anand said, “If only we had managed to ignore the commercial aspects, *Guide* could have made a milestone in the history of cinema ... and the author would have been a happier man” (*The Sunday Statesman: Literary Supplement*, Calcutta, 20 May 2001: 3).

Songs and dialogues have an important place in Hindi cinema. Even there are many Hindi films which are not so popular but the songs and dialogues of those films are very popular. Vijay Anand's *Guide* gives us some ever green songs and dialogues which the Bollywood film lovers can never forget. The music for the film was composed by Sachin Dev Burman, the songs were written by Shailendra and were sung By Lata Mangeshkar,

Mohammed Rafi, Kishor Kumar, Manna De and Sachin Dev Burman. The songs are used significantly to deal with highly dramatic situation and to carry the narrative forward. The songs also expressed the inner thoughts and feelings of the characters. Rosie's feelings are expressed beautifully through the songs like *Aaj phir jeena ki tamanna he* and *Mohe chhal na kia jaaya ... dekho na saiyan beimaan*; Raju's helpless through *Din dhal jaaya haai raat na jay*, *Kaya se hogaya bewafa tere pyar mein* and *Wahan koun hai tera. Gata raha mera dil tuhi meri manjij* and *Tere mere swapna aab saath saath hai* reflect the romantic love between Raju and Rosie and *Allah megh de pani de* reveals the plea of the draught affected helpless people. There are many famous dialogues made by Raju and others in *Guide* which have become so popular that we can hear these from the mouth of common people even today. Some such dialogues are – *Jab matlab se payer hota he, toh pyer se matlab nahi rahta* [When you love only for a reason, then there is no reason for love], *Kaam uska, naam tera* [His work, your name], *Dukh woh amrit hai jisse paap dhulte hai* [Grief is that holy water with which sins get washed], *Yaad mein nasha karta hoon aur nasha mein me yaad karta hoon* [ I drink when I remember you and I remember you when I drink], *Jab aadmi apne naseeb ko kosta rahta hai, uska naseeb bhi usko kosne lagta hai* [A person who keeps cursing about his destiny, his destiny also starts to curse him], *Musibat aur zindagi ka kehte hai chitta tak ke saath rehta hai* [It is said that problems and life stay together until you die], *Gandi naali se nikla hua pani kabhi Gangajal nahi hoti* [Water from the dirty gutter can never become the holy water from the river Ganga] etc.

R. K. Narayan's dislike did not stop the audience from embracing the film and make it run in the cinema halls for many months. Beside its commercial success, the film received many awards and recognition. *Guide* received the Certificate of Merit for the Third Best Feature Film in Hindi at the prestigious 13<sup>th</sup> National Film Awards. National Film Awards are given every year to honour films made across India. The film also created an impression at the 14<sup>th</sup> Filmfair Awards (1967) as it won all the leading awards including Best Film, Best Director (Vijay Anand) and Best Story (R.K.Narayan). Dev Anand gave perhaps his best performance in the title role that justifiably won him the Best Actor award. Waheeda Rehman as Rosie with her exceptional dance won the Best Actress award. With his film *Guide* Vijay Anand reached the peak of his career and established himself as a great filmmaker in the Hindi film industry.

#### IV

It is often said that the printed text is, in some way, superior to and more moral than the filmed version. It is true that “Typically the text version of a story offers a better literary experience than the film does” (Duncan 721). But we cannot deny the fact that a text or a novel is meant for a set of target readers – the so-called ‘literary people’, but a film is a product of popular culture which caters to the taste of all sorts of people, whether literate or not. So, it will be better not to criticize the film *Guide* for its deviation from the original novel but to see it as something new and creative. The film has been received positively by the Bollywood film lovers. Besides, *Guide* is perhaps the best film of Vijay Anand and its popularity can be understood from its commercial success and from the awards it received. We should not forget that the film was nominated as India’s entry for the Oscar. Forgetting R.K.Naryan’s contention on the film, we should salute Vijay Anand and the whole team of *Guide* for their bold attempt to make a film adapted from such a popular novel. To conclude, Dev Anand and Waheeda Rehman’s *Guide* is a big hit film that holds a place of pride in the history of Indian cinema.

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