Research Article

Bijji's Tale from Duvidha to Paheli: Journey of a Folklore

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ABSTRACT

Padam Shree Vijaydan Detha, popularly known as 'Bijji' is a renowned Rajasthani folklore writer, and Rajasthan is the land of colors of folklores, art, and cultural tradition. Every particle of sand tells a story of romance, bravery, and sacrifice. 'Bijji' has given voice to this golden sand singing in silence. 'Duvidha' is a story of a woman's respect, loneliness, and desires. When a sensitive film-maker 'Mani Kaul,' one of the flag bearers of Indian parallel cinema, translates the story on celluloid, the story becomes a cinematic treat decorated with symbolism. Kaul's camera reveals the layers of a woman's heart. Thirty-two years after 'Duvidha' was presented on screen, 'Bijji' echoed again in the heart of another film-maker Amol Palekar. 'Paheli' is a millennial version of 'Duvidha' trying to comprehend a woman's pain in a patriarchal system to a newer generation.

This paper explores the journey of folklore, from a mystic world of words to the audio-visual expressions of an art form cinema to commercial value-added expressions. The analysis is based on socio-cultural norms in the story and cinematic parameters like the color scheme, camera work, music, and direction.

INTRODUCTION

"Things, very strange things, happen in folktales, and there is never much attention given to the whys and wherefores," quoted Marisa Silver. Folktales are often filled with unbelievable characters and circumstances placed in a real or unreal socio-cultural environment. They talk to us as if these are our own stories and become unreal in a moment creating something beyond the audience's reach. In between this gap, the whole world of social, cultural, or individual anomaly is created in as few words as could be. In most cultures, folktales become a statement of local faith and beliefs. They create phrases too.

Vijaydan Detha 'Bijji' is a writer of local intellect. He gathers stories from sand particles of the desert, ponds, lakes, and the cool shadow of 'Khejari'(a tree found in Rajasthan).

He chooses to write in the Rajasthani language, which still needs to work on securing a place in the list of National languages. This is his way of protesting against the discrimination toward Rajasthani. It was said that there is hardly any written literature available in the language, and its grammar and syntax need to be better defined. "Bijji' answers all such arguments with his creation in Rajasthani which includes 14 volumes of his acclaimed book of folktales' Batan Ri Phulwari'.

His work has been translated into Hindi, and he is one of those folk writers whose work has been translated into Audio-visual media. His famous story 'Duvidha' was converted on-screen by Mani Kaul, as 'Duvidha'in 1973. Mani Kaul shot this story in 'Bijji's village Borunda near Jodhpur. Later in 2005, Amol Palekar again made a film on the same story titled 'Paheli .'Famous playwriter Habib Tanvir chose his story to convert into his most acclaimed play ' Charandas Chor' later, Shyam Benegal created a film on the same. Padma Shree and Sahitya academy awards were conferred upon Shri Vijaydan Detha. His name was proposed for the Nobel prize in literature.

Once, he said in an interview with 'India Today' that Rajasthan is a land of stories and whatever he could write is just a drop from the ocean. Detha usually picks unconventional characters from the rural subconscious to

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state unusual and rule-breaking. Many of his protagonists and supporting characters are grey. He uses ghosts, thieves or thugs (muggers) as unusual characters who will travel the path not taken by others. Rebel is the key element of his stories. Tad Williams once said "After all, is it not the way we humans shape the universe, shape time itself? Do we not take the raw stuff of chaos and impose a beginning, middle, and end on it, like the simplest and most profound folktales, to reflect the shapes of our tiny lives? And if the physicists are right, that the physical world changes as it is observed, and we are its only known observers, then might we not be bending the entire chaotic universe, the eternal, ever-active Now, to fit that familiar form?" 'Bijji' is a keen observer of human psychology, its greed, its mean and miser dealings. He also has seen a woman as oil and grease to run the huge mechanism of a social system (Kumar, 2014). Her individuality, aspirations, ambitions, dreams, and even respect have always been on the stack and crushed whenever required.

Revisiting Literature

Daimari (2003) explores feminism in the writings of Indian authors. She begins with the novel's development in India and analyzes the three texts to locate the 'Voices' of women. In all three novels, women are victims of institutions that control and subordinate them. The difference is in the approach of each writer. Women who figure in these texts are representatives of the age-old stereotypes steeped in myth, popular culture, and tradition. Only in *Rudali* does she says that the women are from the central part of the narrative. *Rudali* is an ironic tale of exploitation and above all survival. It is also the story of people's confrontation with the system.

Vibhavari (2010) finds out the difference between Hindi Cinema and Literature in the portrayal of female characters. She states that the difference in the depiction of the vision of a woman in any literary adaptation depends on not one but many factors. The particular film's genre, director's ideology, and limitations of the visual medium are a few to name. She concludes that in the case of such films, which are an adaptation of literary works, infidelity towards the original text becomes a virtue of necessity. However, at the same time, it is an important duty of the director not to bring changes in the identity of the characters in the process of visual transformation of written description, as otherwise, it's pointless to adapt from the original text in the first place.

Rad (2012) examines the impact of social structures on women's lives in both societies' social and cultural contexts in the selected films from Iran and India. She discusses the linkage of gender and media with a specific focus on women's depiction on screen, whilst talking about their position in society. She points out that films maintain the dominant patriarchal ideology and diffusion of traditional female gender roles, in which women are depicted in culture and society. Indian women have not in general, been autonomous and self-defined in the films.

Kumar(2014) analyses the contribution of Vijaydan Detha in bringing a new wave in literature along with other writers like Omprakash Valmiki and Rajendra Yadav. He underlines the sympathy of Detha in portraying the female protagonist in his stories.

METHODOLOGY

The qualitative research method has been adopted for the current study. A short story and two full-length feature films based on the short story have been taken for analysis. A descriptive textual method explaining connotative and denotative meaning has been used while writing the analysis. Three eminent writers have written the same text. One has taken it from the tradition of storytelling in Rajasthan and written in the Rajasthani language and the other two have created audio-visual versions in their way on screen. The subject is an apt material to follow the Auteur theory of cinema as a base to analyze the narrative in films and short stories critically. The French word 'Auteur' means author. This is a film theory that designates the person who is the director of the movie as the author, and he tells the story from his point of view. According to Kidwai, "a French film director, Francois Truffaut, a film critic and one of the founders of the French New Wave, said, "There are no good or bad movies, only good and good and bad directors." In an essay, he writes that films are a great platform for any director to showcase his/her personal ideas and hence, he could easily be regarded as an auteur.

The paper is based on the Auteur theory and is an attempt to explore the different perspectives of different directors/ authors who wrote the story on paper/celluloid in a different time frame and with different objectives.

DISCUSSION

The Plot of Duvidha

As the groom proceeds on a business trip, a newly wedded bride has been left to wait for her husband for five years at her in-law's place. A ghost who saw her on her way to her husband's place falls for her. Ghost disguises her husband to take his place. The father and other family members are happy as they receive gold coins daily. He tricks everyone but tells truth to the bride only and asks her to make a decision. The'Dilemma' for the bride is whether she accepts him. She embraces the life that comes to her. The story takes a twist when the real husband returns. A shepherd's wisdom puts the ghost into a bag. And it is thrown forever. With the bag, the bride's identity, aspirations, and dreams also go away lastingly. 'Bijji' writes the story with all his empathy for the bride. Mani Kaul does not make any changes in the story. He even uses many dialogues as it is. Just translation from Rajasthani to Hindi serves the

purpose. Every frame of Mani Kaul, including the colors and architecture, reveals the story's dimensions.

On the contrary, Amol Palekar adds parallel stories, other characters, and events like a camel race to the original story. The biggest difference is the end, which had been made a happy ending. The ghost enters the husband's body, and the couple lives happily ever after. To conclude a commercial cinema and make it acceptable to a mass audience, a compromise has been made. It is also a 'Paheli' as to why our commercial film-makers find the Mass audience so naive and immature, who can never accept a realistic ending.

Socio-Cultural Background of 'Duvidha'

'Duvidha' is a story staged in rural Rajasthan. Rajasthan is a land known for its feudalistic society that symbolizes a dry monochromatic dessert. Aspirations grow in hearts like bright, colorful costumes rebelliously. 'Bijji' writes "Duvidha" as a document of a woman's desires and aspirations to find a respectable place in her life partner's life. His protagonist, the bride is full of life, her small naive desires have been symbolized by *Ber* or Daloo (a small rounded shrub fruit) in the story which slips down from her palm as soon as she learns that her husband is leaving her for his business on the very next day of their marriage. During the conversation, the groom says that when God never fails in his calculations of breaths of a living being, how can a businessman fail in his calculations ?'Bijji' points out the difference between the worlds of a man and a woman and subtly alleges God for being a man and calculative too. A woman's world is beyond calculations, and her emotions govern her. She struggles with her unanswered questions, and the 'Dilemma' goes on between Gold and Human, Money and Life.

The bride confesses to herself that she could find a place in her mother's womb, but her father's patio could not keep her for long. Nobody ever bothered about her will or wish. Ghost symbolizes a woman's hidden identity, aspirations, and dreams, which society has not acknowledged. They come in dark and vanish in the darkness only. They have existed only for those who wish to approve of them. It is very easy to deny their being itself.

Sound Scape of the Film

Mani Kaul depicts the above symbolism on screen as it is. Narration and dialogues appear alternatively. Most of the time, the narration describes the actions and provides the scope for the audience to think beyond what is visible in images. Switching between narration and dialogue takes place swiftly. Dialogues are not synchronized with lip movement; most of the time, characters are not even facing the camera while delivering the dialogue. Some of the male dialogues are lip-synchronized, whereas female dialogues are not synchronized or in narrative form. Treatment of male and female voices reveals the internal state of their relationship. Kaul uses *Mangniyar* music non-diegetically

to enhance the environment and also to state the story's different episodes with different music interludes.

Amol Palekar's 'Paheli' has been created as commercial cinema. It carries the soul of the story and puts the dilemma of the 'Duvidha' or 'Paheli' in simple words and manner for a larger audience to understand. Though, lyrics written by Gulzar add meaning to the story. He tells the complete story in his lyrics separately.

Visual Elements in Duvidha and Paheli

Color

Detha has written a short story with visual details. He describes the strong thunder and rain when the ghost decides to enter the villa as the groom. He writes that the sand of the ground has covered the Sun, it has changed its belonging from earth to sky. The whole universe has become one, single-colored, with no discrimination, no distinction, as if one God of no shape, size, or color has acquired the world. The thunderstorm followed by rains has created a new bright world where everything has been washed and is ready to make a fresh beginning.

Since the advent of color in cinema, film-makers have creatively used colors. Color is a strong element to outline the tone of a film and define its characters. 'Duvidha' was Mani Kaul's first color film. He has used white color on the walls of the villa to give it a neutral character and to create a heartfelt background. The outfits of most of the male characters are white, which merges into the background, but their turbans are bright yellow, orange, and red colored. Turbans separate them from the background and also from each other. Male domination, their analogous thought process, and unchanging uniform behavior have been depicted in their dresses and turbans. The only female protagonist uses warm, bright colors in her dress in contrast with her male counterparts. In Kaul's words, the colors would be meanings without becoming or representing meanings (Sen, 2021).

'Paheli' is a palette of colors. All the songs with dances have been picturized using many colors in costumes, bangles, and backgrounds. The male protagonist wears a multicolored turban, whereas the other's turban is single-colored. Here, the colors show a broader spectrum of emotions. Overall the colors in films create a feel-good impact on the mass audience. streak

Architecture

The film has been shot in a Rajasthani *Haveli* (Villa) at Detha's village Borunda. The *haveli* was built in old Rajasthani architecture and comprises straight long dividing walls, straight open staircases, Jharokha(window) with artistic marble net, and inside windows to keep oil lamps. Mani Kaul has used all these architectural structures to tell the story. The walls block the movement of the camera to create partitions between the character's jurisdiction area. Kaul has used subjective camera angles

so the audience sees the courtyards, rooms, terraces, and passages from the character's point of view. The linkage between them has to be established by the audience. The walls of *haveli* often direct the movement of the characters. Most of the time, characters enter a preset frame, move through the frame, make an exit, and leave the frame empty. The columns, walls, and pillars play the role of guide for the movement. Sometimes it is found that the characters are trapped in the architecture. It is Mani Kaul's excellence and specialization to use the spaces as one of the characters in the film. The courtyard is the meeting place of the feudal father and the common villagers whereas the verandahs are the set for the interactions between the father and the son. Kaul has used Rajsthani *Mandanas* (rangoli) to depict the continuous tussle between the set rules of feudalism and the rebel.

'Paheli' has also been shot in a Rajasthani haveli and used the beautiful architecture of roofs, pillars, jharokhas, windows, and staircases. The camera takes objective shots most of the time. It creates eye-alluring visuals most of the time. A beautiful Rajasthani architecture, 'Bawdi' has been used as a meeting place for the ghost and bride, ghost and groom, and finally, a place where the happy couple celebrates their togetherness with the village people and finds a water source in the desert.

Editing Elements

Mani Kaul uses a freeze-frame effect many times in the film. Though it was a challenge to create such an effect with the camera and editing equipment available at that time, Kaul takes a step ahead and generate the freeze frames by repeating a single frame at least 48-96 times. He wanted to show the stillness in the flowing time of the story. Freeze frames freeze some standstill notions in the story. During the titles of the film, an opening mouth of a bag in which the ghost was captured at the end of the story is shown for a longer period, and in the same way, a still frame of a hand putting money in the pocket depicts certain characteristic of the father of the male protagonist and comment on the core value of the story. Kaul also uses superimpositions with his Bolex camera, which provided him with double exposure at that time. Superimpositions have been used to depict a slight shift in the sequence with a shorter time gap, meeting past and present in the same frame.

CONCLUSION

'Bijji' writes a story on paper, Mani Kaul writes the same on celluloid, and Amol rewrites this with different intent. While analyzing the nooks and corners of the story, its images, characters, and limitations of characters, it was deeply observed that the medium redefines any text.

Medium has its freedom and limitations. The Kaul could see and depict architecture in the story on screen, but Detha couldn't. The way Kaul was using color in a visual medium, Detha was describing them but in a literary way. But the physical look and feel of colors could be given only on screen. Kaul could merge the colors of the outfits of the male characters to the wall of the *haveli* and convey the point without using a single word.

The power of a single visual over a thousand words is hence proved with the depiction. Contrarily, while reading the story in words that too in the local dialect, carry the color and fragrance of local culture, the involvement and understanding of the audience are unmatched. Detha's style of writing engrosses the reader in words. The crisp words and expressions resonate in the hearts of readers. Here, the intent of both authors is similar. Both are not worried about the audience's reaction, though their medium of expression is different. When Amol Palekar writes the same story on screen, he is worried about the reception of the film by the mass audience. Even when he shares the same medium of expression with Mani Kaul, the story comes out differently, he has to make compromises and makes changes in the original text. He couldn't dare to freeze the frames for 2-3 seconds to get his desired meaning out of certain editing techniques. The mass audience probably will not be able to bear such experiments. The realistic end of the text was also not realistic to present before a large audience. The intent makes a larger difference than the medium.

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