



e-ISSN: 2319-8753 | p-ISSN: 2347-6710

IJRSET

International Journal of Innovative Research in
SCIENCE | ENGINEERING | TECHNOLOGY



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF INNOVATIVE RESEARCH

IN SCIENCE | ENGINEERING | TECHNOLOGY

Volume 12, Issue 5, May 2023

ISSN INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

Impact Factor: 8.423

From Text to Screen: Analysing the Transformation of Vikram Seth's 'A Suitable Boy' to the web series by Shimit Amin

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ABSTRACT : Through the glasses of Marshall McLuhan, Fredric Jameson, and Linda Hutcheon, this abstract investigates the nexus of postmodernism, media studies, and literary adaptation. It looks at the post-modern condition as it is presented in Vikram Seth's "A Suitable Boy" novel and web series adaptation. A cultural and intellectual movement called post-modernism questions prevailing ideas about reality, authority, and truth. Media studies were significantly impacted by Marshall McLuhan's theories of communication and media, which emphasised the importance of media on society and how people see the world. In the post-modern period, when media saturation and digital technology have increased, McLuhan's theories are still relevant. Through his exploration of the fragmentation and loss of historical significance in modern society, Fredric Jameson developed the concept of the post-modern condition.

His cognitive mapping theory makes suggestions for navigating this disjointed world and regaining a sense of the social whole. The Vikram Seth novel "A Suitable Boy" and its web series adaptation offer a chance to compare and contrast how post-modernism is portrayed in the two media. The story, which is set in post-independence India, effectively conveys the tensions between tradition, modernization, and identity. The abstract looks at how the web series handles the difficulties of adapting a multi-layered, expansive narrative via the prism of Linda Hutcheon's adaptation theory.

This abstract aims to shed light on the multifaceted nature of post-modernism and its representation in contemporary cultural productions by examining the influence of McLuhan and Jameson on media studies and their relevance in the post-modern era, as well as by investigating the adaptation of "A Suitable Boy" across different mediums.

Post-Modernism

The mid- to late 20th century saw the rise of the literary and cultural movement known as postmodernism. It is characterised by a mistrust of great narratives, a denial of the existence of a universal truth, and an appreciation of variation and fragmentation. A self-reflexive and sardonic perspective, the use of pastiche and parody, and the blending of high and low culture are frequently traits of postmodern writing. The characteristics of postmodernism in literature will be discussed in this essay.

Self-reflection is one of the main characteristics of postmodern writing. Postmodern writers frequently recognise that they are writing in a certain historical and cultural context and that the works that came before them have inspired them. They frequently participate in metafiction, a genre of writing that emphasises the fact that it is fiction. In this way, the writing process and the structure of the text itself are frequently addressed in postmodern literature. For instance, the narrator addresses the reader directly in Italo Calvino's book "If on a winter's night a traveller" and invites them to engage in the reading process and consider the nature of narrative. Postmodern literature is also distinguished by its rejection of great narratives and the notion of an absolute truth. The relevance of personal experience and perception is instead highlighted by postmodern writers. To portray the complexity of the contemporary world, they frequently employ fragmentation and non-linear storylines. For instance, the narrative of William Faulkner's novel "The Sound and the Fury" is fragmented and non-linear, with each section of the book being narrated by a different character. By taking this strategy, Faulkner is able to examine each character's subjective feelings and viewpoints while without favouring any particular point of view.

Pastiche and parody are other features of postmodern writing. While parody entails employing humour or irony to mock or subvert a specific work or genre, pastiche is the practise of copying a particular writer or genre's style. These strategies are frequently employed in postmodern writing to examine the borders between high and low culture and to

criticise prevailing cultural narratives. For instance, the protagonist of Don DeLillo's book "White Noise" is a professor of Hitler studies who develops an obsession with the concept of the "most photographed barn in America." This barn serves as an example of how cultural icons may become removed from their original context and lose their importance. It has been photographed so much that it has lost its original meaning. Last but not least, postmodern literature is frequently distinguished by its embrace of experimentation and rejection of conventional narrative patterns. Postmodern authors frequently experiment with language, form, and structure to subvert readers' expectations and open up new avenues for storytelling. Postmodern literature offers a rich and interesting investigation of the intricacies of the modern world, despite the fact that it can be complicated and difficult to understand.

The Influence of Marshall McLuhan on Media Studies

One of the most important intellectuals of the 20th century was a Canadian philosopher, educator, and media theorist by the name of Marshall McLuhan. His research focused on how technology has changed human communication and altered how we perceive the world.

The term "media ecology," which emphasises the interaction between media and the environment in which it operates, is frequently used to describe McLuhan's beliefs about media.

The phrase "the medium is the message" was first used by McLuhan in his 1964 book "Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man." This idiom, which has grown to be one of his most well-known and frequently repeated quotes, captures his belief that the medium by which a message is sent is just as significant as the content itself. According to McLuhan, the medium is the context in which communication occurs and it affects how we view the outside world. The communication's message, on the other hand, is its primary focus and is put second to the medium. Additionally, he thought that media had a "cool" or "hot" effect on its audience. While hot media are more immersive and demand less effort from the user, cool media require more active participation from the user. For instance, watching television is a hot medium because it is more immersive and involves less effort from the viewer, whereas reading a book is a cool medium since it demands active involvement and interpretation from the reader.

Social media is a prime example of how some individuals use it to connect with others and create communities while others use it to disseminate hate speech and false information. This difference in media usage and its effects on society are not addressed by McLuhan's thesis.

Despite these criticisms, McLuhan's media theory is still controversial and a frequent topic of conversation in media studies. His views have motivated a new generation of academics to investigate how media affects society and how it affects how we perceive the world. The study of new media, including social media and the internet, has recently been incorporating McLuhan's theories. His concepts have been used by academics to examine the social effects of these technologies as well as how they are transforming how we communicate and relate to one another.

In order to convey how social media has brought individuals from all over the world together and fostered a sense of global community, McLuhan's idea of the global village has been used as an example. Similar to how his idea of hot and cool media has been used to study social media platforms, some contend that while some, like Twitter, are "hot" media that promote non-linear thinking and quick communication, others, like blogs, are "cool" media that demand a greater level of user engagement. Overall, McLuhan's theory of media has had a significant impact on how we think about technology and communication. His views have pushed us to investigate the broader social and cultural ramifications of new media as well as to look more critically about how media affects how we see reality.

In "A Suitable Boy," the television series replaces the novel as the primary form of communication. According to McLuhan, the audience's perception of the narrative and its themes might significantly shift as a result of this change in medium. Because the reader in the novel sees the story through the written word, it makes for a more intimate and reflective experience. The novel's themes can be better understood by the reader as they become fully immersed in the plot and the characters. Due to the gradual and thorough study of the subject allowed by the novel's medium, the reader has ample opportunity to consider the topics and concepts raised. The series, in contrast, tells the story through a visual medium, which can provide the audience a more direct and visceral experience. A more immersive experience that allows the audience to empathise with the characters and their circumstances can be created via the visual medium, which can give the story a new dimension.

On the other hand, the show can also be viewed as a sort of passive viewing, when viewers merely observe the plot develop without actively participating in it. The notion that the media serves as an extension of ourselves is another part

of McLuhan's theory that can be used to analyse "A Suitable Boy." Every form of communication, including the wheel as an extension of our feet or the telephone as an extension of our voice, according to McLuhan, is an extension of human skills. According to McLuhan, television is an extension of our senses of sight and hearing because it allows us to see and hear things that we otherwise would not be able to. The series can also be thought of as an expansion of our senses of sight and sound, giving us access to the narrative on a visual and auditory level not previously accessible with a book. By allowing the audience to more viscerally experience the characters' feelings and connections, the visual medium can deepen the meaning of the story. For instance, the TV show can employ close-up views to depict the characters' feelings or music to heighten the mood of the moment.

In the case of "A Suitable Boy," the show may potentially have an entertainment and sensationalism bias. The audience's attention can be drawn by using the visual medium to produce more dramatic and powerful scenes. The portrayal of the issues and ideas in the story may suffer from a lack of intricacy or depth due to this tendency towards entertaining. In conclusion, Marshall McLuhan's theory of media may be used to examine how "A Suitable Boy" was transformed from a book to a series. The audience's perception of the narrative and its themes may significantly shift when the medium changes from the novel to the television series.

The series might provide viewers a more immediate and visceral experience, but it can also leave viewers feeling cold or uncaring towards the characters and their circumstances. Additionally, the television show may have an entertainment and sensationalism bias, which may leave the portrayal of the themes and ideas in the story lacking in intricacy or depth. The adaptation of "A Suitable Boy" ultimately emphasises the challenges of transferring a story from one medium to another and the influence that the communication medium may have on our perception and understanding of the story.

The Postmodern Condition and Jameson's Theory of Cognitive Mapping

Marxist philosopher and well-known literary critic Fredric Jameson is best known for his contributions to political analysis, cultural theory, and literary criticism. His writings have shaped current discussions on postmodernism, globalisation, and the place of culture in society. Jameson's literary analysis is distinguished by his application of Marxist theory to literary text analysis. He contends that literature is a result of the social and economic circumstances in which it is created rather than merely a reflection of society. According to him, literature both influences and shapes the politics and society of the time in which it is written. Jameson's idea of "cognitive mapping" is one of his most significant contributions to literary criticism. This speaks to a person's capacity to comprehend their role in society and successfully negotiate the intricate social and economic systems that influence their lives.

The possibility to investigate the writings of literary critic Fredric Jameson and how they might be applied to this specific adaption is made possible by the web series adaptation of the novel "A Suitable Boy." For his writings on postmodernism, Marxism, and cultural theory, Jameson is well-known. His idea of "cognitive mapping," which offers a framework for comprehending how culture and society are represented in art and literature, is one of his most significant contributions to literary criticism. This essay will analyse how the adaption of "A Suitable Boy" represents the cultural and socioeconomic reality of India during the time period in which it is set by using Jameson's concepts, notably his theory of cognitive mapping. The tale of Lata Mehra, a young woman looking for a good boy to marry in post-independence India, is told in the book.

The early 1950s, when India underwent significant political and social transformation, are the historical period in which the novel is set. It examines the conflicts between tradition and modernisation as well as the complexity of family, class, and religion. Mira Nair's six-part web series was created in 2020 based on the book. The ability of people to negotiate the challenging social and cultural landscape of modernity is referred to as cognitive mapping in Jameson's work. In his essay "Cognitive Mapping," Jameson makes the case that cultural texts give readers a map of society that helps them comprehend where they fit within it. Jameson argues that the complexity of modern society makes it impossible for individuals to navigate without this map. The author contends that literature and the arts have a special capacity to depict this complex reality and give people a road map for understanding their place in society.

The conversion of "A Suitable Boy" into a web series offers a detailed illustration of cognitive mapping in action. In addition to giving viewers a glimpse into post-independence India, the series also draws a picture of the social and cultural climate of the era for them. The show examines the intricate socioeconomic dynamics of Indian society, including the conflict between Hindus and Muslims and social disparities between the rich and the poor. The series gives a map of the social and cultural landscape of India in the 1950s by illustrating these contradictions. The "A

"Suitable Boy" adaptation not only provides a map of Indian society, but it also captures the political and cultural climate of the time. According to Jameson, cultural writings are influenced by the political and economic climate of the era in which they were written.

According to his argument, culture is always a reaction to the larger social and cultural context in which it is produced. With "A Suitable Boy," the web series depicts the social and political climate of post-independence India. The show explores the difficulties of establishing a new country after decades of colonial domination as well as the conflict between traditional and modern values. The conflict between tradition and modernity is one of the movie "A Suitable Boy"'s major topics. The conflict between conventional Indian norms and the fresh concepts and ideals of the post-independence age is shown in the web series as a reflection of this friction. The show examines the friction between Hindus and Muslims as well as the shifting roles of women in Indian society. The series provides a map of India's cultural and social landscape in the 1950s by illustrating these contradictions.

Postmodernism as Depicted in "A Suitable Boy"

Indian novelist Vikram Seth wrote the book "A Suitable Boy," which was released in 1993. It is a massive family saga that takes place in the made-up post-Partition Indian town of Brahmpur. The book offers a critique of modernity as well as the social, cultural, and political upheavals that followed Partition, even though it is not truly postmodern in style. In the middle of the 20th century, a movement known as postmodernism emerged in reaction to the shortcomings of modernism, which placed an emphasis on objectivity, logic, and progress. The idea of a single, objective truth was rejected in favour of subjectivity, ambiguity, and diversity by postmodernism. Additionally, it disregarded modernism's overarching narratives of progress, democracy, and science in favour of supporting fragmented, local viewpoints.

Through its critique of modernity, "A Suitable Boy" portrays the postmodern era in one aspect. The book takes place during the turbulent years that followed India's independence and Partition in 1947—a time of political turmoil, social change, and cultural upheaval. As the promises of modernity fell short and the realities of poverty, corruption, and communalism took hold, many Indians experienced the despair and disorientation depicted in the novel. The novel also questions the dominant modernist narratives, notably those that centre on gender, class, and religion. A variety of female characters who defy patriarchal expectations and claim their agency and individuality are portrayed in the book. For instance, Lata, the protagonist of the book, decides to follow her own path rather than marry the man her mother has picked for her. Similar to Saeeda Bai, a prostitute who rejects social expectations and pursues a profession in music, Saeeda Bai challenges social norms.

The caste system in India is specifically criticised in the novel along with other class-based systems of modernity. In order to show how these differences continue to influence social and economic life in post-Partition India, the story features people from a variety of castes and social groups. For instance, one of the novel's key protagonists, Maan Kapoor, comes from a wealthy and privileged family, whilst another character, Firoz Khan, comes from a poor and marginalised family. The disputes and tensions that develop between these various social groups are depicted in the book.

Last but not least, the book questions how religion continues to influence Indian culture today despite the divisions that arose during Partition.

The book illustrates characters who belong to various religious groups, such as Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs, and it emphasises how religion can be a source of both conflict and support. For instance, the Muslim character Kabir experiences prejudice and violence from Hindu nationalists, while the Hindu character Haresh develops feelings for a Muslim woman and causes conflict within his own group. Despite not being a postmodern book in terms of style or plot, "A Suitable Boy" does present a postmodern critique of modernity and the social, cultural, and political developments that followed Partition. In addition to depicting the complexity and paradoxes of post-Partition India, the novel questions the major narratives of modernism, notably those that deal with gender, class, and religion. As a result, the book paints a complex and multidimensional picture of a society in transition.

The Art of Adaptation : An Overview of Adaptation Theory

A subset of literary theory called adaptation theory studies how a literary work—such as a novel or a play—is transformed into a different medium, such as a movie or television programme. The Canadian academic Linda Hutcheon, who has written extensively on the issue, is frequently cited as the originator of this hypothesis. We shall

examine Hutcheon's adaptation theory in this essay, as well as its main ideas and applicability to modern culture. The foundation of Hutcheon's adaptation theory is the notion that adaptation is more complicated than just translating or replicating one medium into another. Instead, it is a difficult transformation process where the original work is altered while still being kept in the adaptation.

The author Hutcheon states in her book "A Theory of Adaptation" that "Adaptation is not imitation, but rather a transformation that is both a creative and a critical act." The foundation of Hutcheon's theory is the idea of intertextuality, which describes how all texts are influenced by texts that came before them. Every work of art is a part of a broader network of cultural production, and every work of art is influenced by the cultural and historical settings in which it is produced, according to the concept of intertextuality. Given that it entails the interaction between two distinct works of art, adaptation is for Hutcheon a particularly rich sort of intertextuality. Hutcheon's adaptation theory includes the notion of "reflexivity" as one of its core ideas.

An adaptation can bring to light parts of the work that may have been buried or missed in the original by interpreting it through the prism of a different medium. Hutcheon's notion of adaptability is not without its detractors. According to some academics, Hutcheon's emphasis on reflection and interpretation can breed a form of relativism in which all possible readings of a piece are held to be equally acceptable.

Others have criticised Hutcheon for putting too much emphasis on how the original work and the adaptation relate to one another and not enough on how each medium functions uniquely. Hutcheon's adaptation theory is still a crucial and influential way to comprehend the intricate connections between many works of art in spite of these criticisms. Hutcheon's emphasis on reflection and interpretation can aid us in navigating the complicated landscape of contemporary culture and comprehending the connections between various pieces of art in an era of oversaturated media and continual adaptation.

Finally, Linda Hutcheon's adaptation theory offers a potent and sophisticated method for comprehending the transformation of one piece of art into another. Her work continues to have a significant impact on current cultural studies. Her emphasis on intertextuality, reflexivity, and adaptation as interpretation has contributed to change how academics and creatives think about adaptation. Hutcheon's adaptation theory offers a useful foundation for comprehending the complexity of this as we continue to modify and transform works of art in fresh and inventive ways.

A Cross-Media Analysis of The Novel and Series

Vikram Seth's masterpiece, "A Suitable Boy," was released in 1993. The movie takes place in newly independent India in the 1950s and follows the lives of a number of characters from various social groups and origins. The book was turned into a web series in 2020, under Mira Nair's direction. Like the book, the television series focuses on the individuals' lives and the challenges they face in trying to find love, a spouse, and a place in society. In this comparative analysis, we will look at how the web series and the book compare and contrast.

Plot and Storyline

With a few minor exceptions, the web series sticks to the same plot as the book. Lata, a young girl from a middle-class family, and her mother's efforts to locate her a suitable boy for marriage are the central themes of both the series and the novel. The series, which excludes the Kapoor family, concentrates on three families whereas the novel centres on the lives of four families. However, compared to the novel, the web series does not go as far into the lives of some of the characters. Haresh Khanna, for instance, who plays a key role in the novel, is given less screen time in the series. The show also includes a brand-new plotline starring Maan Kapoor, the affluent politician's son who falls in love with Saeeda Bai, a courtesan. This side plot, which is absent from the book, gives the narrative a new dimension.

Characters

While there are some similarities between the characters in the web series and the novel, there are also some deviations. With their ideas, emotions, and motivations fully explored, the characters in the narrative are more multidimensional and complicated. Some of the characters in the series are not as well developed as they are in the novel, and some of their motivations are not as obvious. For instance, Mrs. Rupa Mehra, Lata's mother, is presented in the book as being

preoccupied with finding her daughter a good boy, even at the expense of Lata's happiness. She is portrayed in the series, nevertheless, as a more sympathetic figure who actually cares about her daughter's welfare. Maan Kapoor's character receives more screen time and is presented in the series in a more sympathetic light than in the book. In the book, Maan is a weak character who acts rashly and poorly thought out judgements. Though he is portrayed in the series as a more sympathetic character who is trying to fit in and is caught between his love for Saeeda Bai and his obligation to his family, he is a struggling member of society.

Writing and Dialogue

Vikram Seth's writing is superb, and the book is a literary classic. He has a gift for developing fully realised people and vivid situations, and his prose is rich and lyrical. The writing quality of the web series, however, is not as high as that of the novel, and some of the conversation comes off as awkward and forced.

Finally, the web series and the novel both have advantages and disadvantages. The book is a masterwork of Indian writing and is unique in how well it portrays the spirit of post-independence India. The web series, on the other hand, is a visual pleasure and does a better job than the novel at bringing the characters to life. As a result, it is challenging to compare the two because they are made of different media and have different strengths. In conclusion, the "A Suitable Boy" web series is a faithful adaptation of the book and gives the plot its own distinctive taste. The online series boasts a terrific ensemble of actors that bring the characters to life, and it has amazing visuals. For everyone interested in post-independence India, the book is a classic of Indian literature and a must-read. In the end, both the book and the web series are enjoyable and provide insight into the complexity of Indian society.

Conclusion

The numerous facets of postmodernism and how it manifests itself in literature and other art forms have been covered in this research study. This essay has examined the theories of Marshall McLuhan and Fredric Jameson, two well-known intellectuals who have made substantial contributions to our comprehension of the postmodern era. The novel *A Suitable Boy*, its ideas, and its portrayal of the postmodern era in India have also been examined in this essay. The variations between the novel and the television adaptation of the novel have also been examined, showing the difficulties and opportunities of translating literary works into different mediums.

The theory of adaptation has been studied, especially in relation to how *A Suitable Boy* was turned into a series. The article has also done a thematic analysis of the book and series, looking at the themes and motifs that repeat in both of these tellings of the same story. Overall, this study has shown that postmodernism is a complicated phenomena with many facets that calls for thorough examination and interpretation. We have gained a deeper grasp of the complexity of postmodernism, its link to society and culture, and its implications for the arts and humanities by studying the work of scholars like McLuhan and Jameson, as well as the literary and media adaptations of "A Suitable Boy."

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