

**National Seminar
on
FICTION INTO FILM: Satyajit Ray's Interpretation of Tagore and Premchand**

Organised by Department of English and Modern European Languages (UGC Special Assistance Programme) and Mass Communication Research Centre, Jamia Millia Islamia, in collaboration with the Sahitya Akademi, November 23-25, 2006

Fiction and film have a kind of symbiotic relationship. There are quite literally thousands of books that have been made into movies. The Internet Movie Data Base (IMDT) itself lists over 20,000 movies based on novels! Though outwardly the cinematic medium may appear to contain ingredients of drama such as actors, plot and spectacle, it is essentially a narrative medium. Critics



'Charulata'

like Neil Sinyard believe that films formed an integral part of 20th century literature. The



'Postmaster'

legacy of nineteenth century novel, he writes, 'is the twentieth century film. In many novels of the Victorian and the Edwardian era, with their burdensome cataloguing of the details of the appearance of the outside world, one senses an author who is either waiting for, or who will be made redundant by, the camera.'

The response of the modern writer to the coming of film has also been variable. 'The cinema's swift change of scene, this blending of emotion and experience', said Tolstoy, was much better than the

'heavy, long drawn out kind of writing to which we are accustomed. It is closer to life.' Tolstoy felt that it could initiate a revolution in the methods of literary art. James Joyce, who founded the first cinema in Dublin, and Virginia Woolf, who contributed several thoughtful essays on cinema, were similarly fascinated by the new medium. For writers like D. H. Lawrence, however, cinema was an enemy. It homogenised popular culture, it subdued art to industry and to the lowest common denominator of mass taste. It undermined the book and eroded literacy.



'Ghare Baire'

In India, too, fiction has always been a perennial source for films. When one thinks of great Indian films like DEVDAS, CHEMEEN, PATHER PANCHALI, UMRAO JAAN, GUIDE, GHARÉ BAIRÉ, RUDALI one realises that all of them were based on masterpieces of



'Sadgati'

fiction. The process of transmutation from a book to a film, from the printing page to screen, is also rather complex. The way a writer conceives his work and the way a film-maker visualises his film may differ, sometimes radically. Many writers are often wary of giving rights for films for their novels because they feel that the directors may not be able to do justice to the finer and subtler elements of the text.

E.M. Forster continually refused filming of his novels because he felt that the film-maker would falsify the original intent. Satyajit Ray, a fiction writer and a film maker, who turned his own fiction and those of others into film recorded his impression about this process in the books, *Bishay Chalachchitra* (1976) and *Our Films, Their Films*. Some of our well-known fiction writers, including Premchand, had a problematic relationship with the world of Indian cinema. The proposed seminar will explore different aspects of the process involved in turning a literary text into a film. Its special focus will be Satyajit Ray's interpretation of Tagore (Ghare Baire, Charulata, Teen Kanya) and Premchand (Shatranj ke Khiladi, Sadgati). The presentations will be of one-hour duration (including small excerpts from films), followed by discussions. Papers written in the theoretical framework of inter-semiotic translation are also welcome.



'Shatranj ke Khiladi'

We shall be in a position to offer airfare to a select number of participants but request you to look for a check fare/ bargain fare/apex fare and try to get the best deal you can on the ticket.

Your stay will be arranged at the University campus and we shall take care of the hospitality on the days of the conference.

Please send your abstracts to the following address latest by October 10, 2006, along with full postal address:

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