

Critique

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**Manju Borah's *Ko: Yad***



The first sequence of Manju Bora's film 'Ko: Yad' shows a woman coming out of a house in the frame of a mid-long shot. Then projecting a river, a beautiful long shot is taken. This long shot shows combined movement, i.e. the movement of the object and the movement of the camera together. This shot reflects side view of the woman and shows her running. There is a soliloquy of the woman at the end of this shot. This soliloquy is – 'Instead of behaving this, why doesn't he die?' This is followed by a beautiful close up shot of the woman's face. This shot indicates that she is very much worried about something. All these shots and the soliloquy naturally increased the curiosity of the audience. The audience wants to know why the woman is running. For whom she is running? And then the woman finds

her desperate husband. Immediately, the excitement of the audience increases. The audience wants to know why the woman's husband is depressed. To find out these things, director Manju Bora then introduces a flashback in which the life of the main character Poukam is told from his childhood. Director Bora continues the story of Poukam with extraordinary cinematic language. The well-structured screenplay makes this film a good piece of art. This film has captured the curiosity of the audience from the first sequence to the end.

There are several thought provoking films made in the Mishing language of Assam. The first Mishing language film directed by Dilip Doley and Narayan seal was 'Panoi Jongki'. This film was released in 2002 and bagged the national award for

Special Jury Mention in 2002. The film was based on Rajanikanta Bordoloi's novel 'Miri Jiyari'. Recently, 'Bomba Ride' directed by Biswajit Bora was selected for the International Film Festival of India. Another film that enriched the tradition of Mishing language cinema is Manju Borah's 'Ko:Yad'. The film won the National Film Award for Best Mishing Language Film. The film also won the 60th National Film Award for Best Cinematography. The film also received the Best Picture award at the Bangalore Film Festival. The film obtained the Best Director Award at the Ladakh International Film Festival. "Ko:Yad" was also screened at the 15th Mumbai Film Festival. The Bangalore Film Festival's Chitra Bharati section judge S.K. Bhagwan said about this film – "Ko:Yad" has presented little described story of Missing villagers very well".

The film is based on the life of a simple Mishing man named Poukam. Poukam lost his mother at an early age. His father abused his mother physically and mentally. Poukam's father married for second time. Poukam suffered a lot in such a domestic environment. One day, his mother could not live with the torture of Poukam's father and returned to her father's house. Poukam's grandfather and his family did not think it was a good move for his mother. Instead of arranging for her to stay in their own house, they built a separate house for Poukam and his mother. Incidentally, Poukam's mother was raped by a villager. After that Poukam's mother jumped into the river and committed suicide. She left Poukam alone in the ocean of sorrow. Then he returned to his father house and lived with his father. His father taught him to sail. Gradually the river and the boat his father gave him became a great asset to him. One day he married Takchiri. They had three children. The eldest son, Migom, was quite good at studying. And his brothers and sisters did not pursue higher education to fulfill his dream of becoming a doctor. Everyone assumed that Poukam's family would be financially strong after Migom became a doctor. But Migom married a girl from a rich family in the city and left home. Poukam got another big shocked in his life. After this, the younger son got married and lived separately from his father. Poukam's daughter also betrayed him as she run

away to a boy. Every incident hurt Poukam, but he was sure that his river and boat would never betray him. But at the end, it was seen that the boat sank in the river. One day the river and the boat also betrayed him.

The plot of the film 'Ko:Yad' seems to be influenced by 'Nihilism'. Nihilism believers talk about the meaninglessness of life. Nihilists believe that no being or thing has a real existence. Nihilists also say that no being or thing has permanence. If we look at Poukam's life, we see that he lost his mother, the source of his happiness, at an early age. He was always proud of his children. But they betrayed him. He had a pride that the river and the boat would never betray him. But one day the river and the boat also betrayed him. So, the subject matter in this film indicates that nothing on earth is permanent. Director Manju Borah says about the philosophy of this film – 'It is based on a philosophy which states that nothing is Permanent' (A filmmaker with a mission, our front cover, 28 Nov, 2016).

At a point of Poukam's life, everybody left him, everybody betrayed him whom he trusted most. But from the beginning to the end, his wife stood by Poukam. But he doesn't care about this. In this regard, Manju Borah told in an interview-

"It's the story of a man who realizes that people, he felt he was very close to left him. Even the boat he stuck to, risking his relationships with everyone else, is sucked in the river by a whirlpool. His wife, however, remained with him like a pillar of support though he failed to appreciate and understand her value in his life" (A filmmaker with a mission, our front cover, 28 Nov, 2016)

A verse in the Bhagavad Gita says that words are Brahma. What comes out of the mouth later becomes reality. This is supported by Indian philosophy. This belief in Indian philosophy is reflected in 'Ko:Yad'. In the film, Poukam's son Migom jokingly said that if the river betrayed his father and sank the boat, what would his father reaction? Poukam scolded Migom for his joke. He believed that such words should not come out of people's mouths as words are Brahma. Indeed, one day it turned out that what his son Migom had joked about as a child came true.

The film is based on the novel of the same name by Anil Panging. Anil Panging's novel was published serially in 'Sadin'-a quarterly published newspaper. In making this novel into a film, Manju Borah has omitted many things from the novel and the filmmaker has included many things himself. The novel is made into a film called 'Ko:Yad' without distorting the essence of the novel. This adaptation can be called a faithful adaptation. There are many ways in which director Borah has deviated from the original novel and turned 'Ko:Yad' into a better film by adding her creative inputs in the content of the film or applying cinematic style.

First, at the beginning of Anil Panging's novel, we learn that Poukam has lost his mother, his children have betrayed him, and the river and the boat have left him. The novel describes how these things happened. But the film doesn't tell us at first that the children, the river, the boat, etc. have all betrayed him. The film starts with a depressed, distrustful Poukam, whose life is fluently portrayed through a few shots without dialogue. Then the flashback depicts Poukam's life from childhood. The film does not explain the reasons for Poukam's grief at the beginning like the novel and for this reason the curiosity of the audience has increased.

Secondly, Boating in the river to pick up firewood is the main job of Poukam's father. He is passionate in his job. He taught Poukam his job very well. The novel does not describe this aspect in details. But the film takes this seriously. Several shots depict how the father taught his son how to sail in the river and how to pick up firewood. In one sequence we see the father is teaching the job to his 8/9 years old son Poukam. In the next sequence we observe that old father and around 20 years old Poukam are busy in picking up firewood. The transition of these two sequences is outstanding. The sequences beautifully signify the bonding of the father-son relation. The director beautifully conveys much of the story through a few shots of his father's aging.

Third, the novel shows the child Poukam expressing his feelings through various dialogues. But the child Poukam's has no dialogue in the film. Instead, his silence and expression express

everything. For instance, there are no emotional dialogues in the film where his father tells him not to cry when he loses his mother. Omitting dramatized description of the novel, Manju Borah makes the film realistic.

Fourth, Manju Bora omits the long arguments of Ladai Budhi and other women with the forest department employees which are available in the novel. These are the long stories that the director Bora has omitted because they may hinder the understanding of the essence of the main story. This is Bora's achievement as a director.

The novel tells the story of the love between Binay Phukan, a ranger in the Barahi forest, and a Mishing girl named Padmaja. The director Bora did not include this sub-story in the film either. Therefore, it can be seen that Manju Bora has deviated from the text of Anil Panging's novel at many times and created an original visual text.

There are examples of literature being influenced by film in the same way that literature is influenced by film. We know that the popularity of Peter Jackson's 'Lord of the Rings' played an active role in the rise of the waning genre of fantasy literature. Many writers have focused on the fantasy genre due to the popularity of Lord of the Rings. Similarly, the fifth book in the Harry Potter series was being written at the time of the release "Harry Potter and the sorcerer's stone", the first film of the series in 2001. The book describes the physical appearance of the characters Lee Jordan and Angelina Johnson. The author describes these two characters in his fifth book, which does not describe what these two characters are like in previous books. The research journal 'Literature and cinema known ways of interaction in the 21st century' states –

“Some elements of the movie can be reflected in the literary work when the screen version of one part of the book is being produced simultaneously with the process of writing another part. For example, such a situation happened to a series of books about Harry Potter. The moment of a release of the first movie – 'Harry Potter and the sorcerer's stone' (2001) – coincided with the time of writing of the fifth book “Harry Potter and the Order of the Phenix”. In this book two minor heroes – Lee Jordan (an actor–

Michael Bakari Jordan) – and Angelina Johnson (an actress – Danielle Tabor) acquires new details in the description. Lee Jordan is described as a tall boy with dreadlocks on the head, and Angelina Johnson was given the following characteristics: a tall black girl with long braids. It is obvious that such details were published in books, thanks to the actors who played in the movie, – until the fifth book the author did not comment on appearance of these characters in any way. Thus, the visual embodiment became in many respects inseparable from the literary source. In particular, Harry Potter's world exists not only consistently – at first in the book, and after- in cinema, but also in parallel– in literature and in cinema”

This example of the Harry Potter series shows that film can also influence literature. Manju Borah's original novel 'Ko:Yad' was published in serially in the newspaper 'Sadin'. After the release of the film, the author was inspired to publish the novel in book form and used the photograph of the film on the cover of the book. The picture of the film "Notebook" has been also used in the cover of the book on the cover. The Notebook (2004) is an American romantic drama film directed by Nick Cassavetes, based on the novel of the same name by Nicholas Sparks. The novel was published in 1996.

Many times the language of the film is made of personification. The boat of Poukam in the film 'Ko:Yad' is represented as a living character. The film shows Poukam talking to the boat several times. For instance, losing faith on his children, Poukam talks to the boat. He tells the boat – “since you are here I am not worried. Even if no one feeds us, you will. Let the worlds abandon us. This life has witnessed a lot of turbulence. I wonder how much of my heart has eroded away in large chunks. Let it be. I am not like the others, those that break down and cry; I will never cry.”

Many filmmakers have used the river as a metaphor to make the plot of the film interesting. Manju Bora also uses the river as a metaphor in 'Ko:Yad'. The river is life for Poukam. The river portrays the dynamism, enthusiasm and inspiration of Poukam's life.

His father taught him to carry firewood from the river to the boat. In this sequence, the father is seen swimming in the river and catching firewood. Then, on the boat, the teenage Poukam picked up the wood from his father's hands. The other shot shows the elderly father on the boat and the young man poukam swimming in the river to catch firewood. The father-son relationship comes alive in this sequence. The sequence of picking up firewood in the boat is reproduced towards the end of this film. But this time, Poukam's sons are not on the boat to help his father. The two sequences of picking up wood in the boat fluently portray the conflict of the generational gap without spending a single dialogue. These are the things that show the skill of director Bora in making the good language of the film.

Poukam's life was gradually challenged. One day, an engine-powered boat with more facilities came to the Poukam's area. Poukam and his wife are afraid of the arrival of the motor boat. But they have not expressed the fears anywhere through any dialogue. Instead, two sequences are shown. Oneday, Poukam's wife observed an engine-powered boat. The close up shot reflects her depression. In another sequence, while waiting for his son on the bank of the river, Poukam looks speechlessly at the engine-powered boat. This is presented in a sensitive manner through a couple of long shots (L.S.) and close up shots (C.L.S). It is commonly said that scenes with good shots speak in movies. Everything in 'Ko:Yad' is told through camera shots where dialogue is secondary.

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