
**Cinematic Translation of Diaspora:
Adaptation Techniques in The Namesake and The Mistress of Spices**

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Abstract:

Cultural memory and reconstruction of diasporic identity function as a crucial tool in Mira Nair's *The Namesake* and Paul Mayeda Berges's *The Mistress of Spices*. This study examines how cultural memory is visualised in these film adaptations with the use of various adaptation techniques. Drawing on the theoretical framework of Hamid Naficy, Linda Hutcheon and Stuart Hall. The analysis suggests adaptation as a dynamic process mediating between text and screen in the homeland and diaspora. Focusing on adaptation techniques such as narrative compression, visual symbolism and strategic omission, the paper demonstrates how *The Namesake* and *The Mistress of Spices* use these techniques to reconstruct the diasporic identity with the help of cultural memory. The film emphasises material objects, domestic spaces and rituals, which function as a visual archive of homeland memory. This represents identity as lived and collective rather than a simple recollection of memory. Moreover, the study argues that the visualisation of literary sources influences various internal aspects of thematic significance. With the help of adaptation techniques, the film presents identity as an ongoing process rather than a fixed one. This leads to the essential part of this paper which examined how adaptation techniques affect the diasporic identity during cinematic adaptation.

Keywords- Cultural memory, Adaptation, Diaspora, Accented cinema**Introduction****Background of the Study**

The relationship between literature and cinema is historical. It has been a subject of inquiry, especially in the field of adaptation studies. Film adaptation of literary texts involves a complex process. It is not merely a transfer of narrative content from one medium to

another. It is a complex process of reinterpretation and transformation shaped by cinematic techniques. The transfer involves various factors such as the selection of a literary source, the audience's expectations and cultural contexts. As Linda Hutcheon argues, adaptation is both repetition and creation. It is a seamless transfer of the source text to the cinematic medium. In contemporary cinema, adaptation of diasporic literature has gained prominence. Due to globalisation, the migration stories are gaining attention. The narratives often follow themes of migration, identity, cultural displacement and belonging. The transition from text to screen in such cases becomes significant. It became important and necessary that filmmakers translate not only narrative elements but also emotional and cultural diasporic experiences. This study focuses on two film adaptations: *Namesake* (2006), directed by Mira Nair, and *The Mistress of Spices* (2005), directed by Paul Mayeda Berges. Both films are based on novels by Indian diasporic authors and engage with themes of identity and cultural negotiation. However, they differ significantly in their use of adaptation techniques and their representation of diaspora.

Rationale of the Study

While both films originate from similar thematic concerns, their cinematic execution reveals contrasting approaches to adaptation. This study is motivated by the need to explore their differences. It focuses on how adaptation techniques influence not only narrative but also the representation of diasporic identity.

Existing studies often focus on fidelity to the source text or on thematic analysis of the respective film. However, there is a gap to explore comparative use of techniques such as compression, omission, addition and visual storytelling in shaping the meaning. By comparing the use of these techniques in the two films *The Namesake* and *The Mistress of Spices*, respectively, this study seeks to bridge this gap.

Objectives of the study

The primary objective of this study is to analyse the adaptation techniques used in *The Namesake* and *The Mistress of Spices*. It will help in understanding how these techniques transform literary narratives into a cinematic art form. The study aims to compare the effectiveness of these techniques in representing the diasporic identity. It will guide the exploration of the relationship between adaptation strategies and cultural representation.

Research questions

This study seeks to explore the following research questions:

1. What adaptation techniques are employed in *The Namesake* and *The Mistress of Spices*?
2. How do these techniques shape the narrative structure of the films?
3. In what ways do this adaptation strategies influence the representation of diasporic identity?

4. How do the two films differ in their approach to adaptation and cultural representation?

Scope and limitations

This study is limited to a comparative analysis of two film adaptations and does not attempt an exhaustive study of all diasporic cinema. The focus remains on specific adaptation techniques and their impact on representation. While the study engages with theoretical frameworks, it does not aim to provide an extensive theoretical critique but rather applies theory to textual analysis.

Literature review

Introduction

The study of literary adaptation has attracted scholarly attention in recent decades. The representation of different cultures, identities, and themes became a subject of exploration in these studies. As globalisation has intensified cross-cultural interactions, narratives of migration, identity and displacement have become central in both literature and cinema. The adaptations of diasporic texts offer a rich site for examining how culture is translated across media. This reviews existing research on two interconnected areas: film adaptation, diasporic cinema. It helps in situating the present study within these academic conversations. It identifies the gap in present studies to be further explored in this dissertation. The study focuses on the comparative analysis of adaptation techniques and their impact on diasporic representation.

Adaptation studies

Adaptation studies managed to travel a long way from fidelity to interpretation. Early studies of adaptation were largely focused on the similarities between a text and a film. The concept of fidelity was the true scale of authenticity of an adaptation. Evaluation of films was based on how closely they adhere to their source text. Critics often viewed deviations from the original as shortcomings. It was considered that cinema is overpowering literature. However, this approach has been widely challenged by contemporary scholars who moved beyond fidelity.

Linda Hutcheon argued that adaptation is not mere imitation of the source text. It should be understood as a process of reinterpretation rather than replication. In *A Theory of Adaptation*, she focused on locating the understanding of adaptation. She emphasises that adaptations are shaped by the specific elements of their medium and the audience's expectations. This perspective shifted the focus from fidelity to transformation. It allowed the evaluation of film adaptations. Similarly, scholars such as Robert Stam criticised fidelity-based approaches. In *Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation*, he argued that fidelity fails to account for the intertextual and dialogic nature of adaptation. According to him, adaptations are not secondary texts but independent works. Adaptations engage with their sources in complex ways to produce an outcome.

Scholars such as Thomas Leitch have focused on adaptation techniques, such as narrative compression, omission, addition and visual translation. These studies help in highlighting the strategies used by filmmakers to adapt a story into a cinematic art form. However, while these techniques are frequently used and discussed, there is relatively limited research that systematically compares their use. This study builds on these theoretical developments. Focusing on how adaptation techniques function within two diasporic film adaptations. By moving beyond fidelity to examine and analyse how meaning is constructed through cinematic strategies.

Diasporic Cinema and Cultural Representation

The representation of diaspora in cinema is frequently studied in film studies, particularly in the context of postcolonial cinema. In this regard, Hamid Naficy's concept of accented cinema has been influential in this field of study. Naficy argues that diasporic films produced by exilic filmmakers often exhibit a distinctive style. These kinds of films include unique thematic features such as fragmentation, hybridity, cultural memory and displacement. He provides these diasporic films with a framework that helps in understanding the hidden features. Scholars have applied his framework to analyse how films represent complex themes in diasporic cinema. These studies emphasised the importance of lived experiences, cultural memory and negotiation. It highlights the tension between the homeland and the hostland. In diasporic film adaptation, this framework can also help in understanding the same dimensions. This can highlight the role of cinematic technique in conveying those experiences. In addition to Naficy, Stuart Hall's theory of cultural identity has been prominent in the studies of diaspora. Hall conceptualises identity as a process of becoming rather than being fixed. According to Hall, identity is fluid and shaped by historical, cultural, and lived contexts. This concept helped in analysing the characters who navigate multiple cultural identities. Research on diasporic cinema usually focuses on the themes of identity, belonging, hybridity, memory, nostalgia and generational conflict. While these thematic analyses are valuable and help in understanding a diasporic film adaptation, they sometimes overlook the role of adaptation techniques. This study seeks to address this gap by examining how cinematic strategies influence the portrayal of diaspora.

Adaptation Techniques and Cinematic Representation

A growing body of researchers has begun to explore how specific adaptation techniques influence film adaptation. The essential techniques of film adaptation, such as compression, omission, and selection, are pivotal in meaning construction. The concept of visual storytelling has also received significant importance in representing certain themes. Film scholars emphasise the importance of imagery, symbolism and expression in conveying meaning. In adaptations, description is replaced by visual elements to create a new form of expression.

However, while these techniques are widely acknowledged, there is a lack of detailed analysis of their function. This gap particularly became evident in studies of diasporic cinema, where the focus tends to remain on the thematic content rather than cinematic form. This comparative analysis of the same techniques used in different movies presents an opportunity to bring out the functionalities attached to them.

Research Gap

The review of the existing literature reveals several gaps that this study seeks to address. The lack of comparative analysis in this field is evident. Most studies examine *The Namesake* and *The Mistress of Spices* separately. Their adaptation strategies are highlighted respectively, but a comparison has not yet been done. The limited focus on techniques in a tool-based art form is necessary. While the adaptation theory is well-developed, there is relatively limited emphasis on specific techniques. Therefore, their impact on representation is yet to be explored in its full potential. The existing research often treats adaptation and diaspora as separate areas. The examination of how the adaptation techniques shape diasporic representation is a new approach. The unexplored link between adaptation technique and diaspora is suitable for research purposes, as there is a need for studies that combine theoretical frameworks with a close analysis of films.

Positioning of the Present Study

This research is at the intersection of adaptation studies and diasporic cinema. By focusing on adaptation techniques, it offers a new insight into how literary sources are transformed into films. It also studies how this transformation affects the representation of identity in a diasporic context. The study contributes to existing knowledge by providing a comparative analysis of two films, namely, *The Namesake* and *The Mistress of Spices*. By applying theoretical frameworks to cinematic techniques, it examines the relationship between form and representation. In doing so, the paper moves beyond thematic analysis to explore the technical aspects of cinematic art form in film adaptation and meaning construction.

Theoretical framework

Introduction

The process of adaptation is not only technical but also complex and involves multiple factors. These factors include decisions based on the availability of resources and their impact on the outcome. This shapes the narrative meaning, cultural representation, audience interpretation and unity in the cinematic transformation. This section outlines the theoretical framework that guides these elements of present study. The dissertation focuses on the comparative analysis of the adaptation techniques used in *The Namesake* and *The Mistress of Spices*. This intersectional study requires an interdisciplinary framework that combines adaptation theory, diaspora studies, and film theory.

To analyse multiple dimensions of the selected topic, this study primarily draws on the work of Linda Hutcheon, Hamid Naficy, and Stuart Hall. Along with these major theorists, the study also takes into consideration other scholars in the respective fields, such as Robert Stam, Chapman, Thomas Leitch, and Homi K. Bhabha. The sharp insights and underlying framework of these theorists provide a base for this comparative analysis. This helps in combining the theory of adaptation with the Cultural theory of diasporic identity formation. Hutcheon's theory provides a framework for understanding adaptation as reinterpretation, Naficy helps in understanding the concept of accented cinema and offers insights into diasporic filmmaking, and Hall's theory of cultural identity explains how identity is constructed and represented. Together, these theoretical understandings enable a comprehensive analysis of how adaptation techniques can influence the cinematic portrayal of diasporic identity.

Adaptation theory

Adaptation theory is evolving significantly over time. From fidelity to reinterpretation, the questions are becoming more relevant and dynamic. Early approaches treated adaptation as a mere imitation of other artists' work and often emphasised fidelity. Judging a film's closeness to its source text raises serious concerns about the characteristics of adaptation itself. However, contemporary scholars such as Robert Stam argue that such an approach is limited and fails to account for the differences between literary and cinematic media. Seymour Chapman vividly classified the ability and influence of both media and argued to treat literary and cinematic adaptation as an individual art form, as each has specific characteristics and functions. Linda Hutcheon challenges the fidelity model by proposing that adaptation should be understood as both Product and Process (Hutcheon). Adaptation is a product derived from the work that maintains a relationship with its source. As a process, adaptation involves reinterpretation and transformation; it is highly shaped by the limitations and possibilities of the new medium. In this case, *The Namesake* is a product that maintains a close relationship with its source text, and *The Mistress of Spices* is a process of transformation that is highly shaped by the cinematic possibilities.

Hutcheon further argues that adaptation is a form of "repetition without replication". It means that in a film adaptation, while the core narrative remains recognisable, it's reimagined in a new context. This perspective applies to both selected films, as *The Namesake* and *The Mistress of Spices* demonstrate different degrees of transformation. Another aspect of the adaptation theory is the concept of medium specificity. Literature and cinema are two different media and operate through different modes of expression. One is highly descriptive, and another is highly visual. While literature relies on written description, internal monologues and accuracy of chosen words, the film relies on visual imagery, sound, lighting, dialogues, costumes and performance of the actors. As a result, certain elements of

a novel cannot be directly translated into a film. To compensate for these differences, the adaptation techniques are used. This leads to the use of specific techniques such as – narrative compression, omission and selection, addition and transformation, and visual storytelling and symbolism. These techniques shape the meaning of the narrative and help accommodate the practical differences of literature and cinema. For instance, visual storytelling and symbolism can help capture a vivid description of the novel if used correctly, as heavy symbolism can dilute the complex narrative meaning.

In this study, the adaptation theory serves as the primary framework for analysing the two films, how they reinterpret the source text, rather than evaluating fidelity. The focus is on how adaptation technique's function and what effect they produce.

Accented cinema and Diasporic filmmaking

The concept of accented cinema is developed by Hamid Naficy. This provides a crucial framework for understanding films that showcase diasporic and exilic contexts. Naficy explains that filmmakers who experience displacement often develop a distinctive cinematic style shaped by their cultural and historical conditions. In this study, Mira Nair is one such filmmaker, and Paul Mayeda Berges worked in partnership with his wife, Gurinder Chadha, of Indian origin. This aligns with Naficy's understanding that filmmakers' experiences shape their distinctive cinematic style.

According to Naficy, accented cinema is characterised by: themes of displacement, memory, nostalgia, evolving identity, belonging, fragmented narratives and representation of border spaces and transitions. These elements reflect the lived experiences of diaspora. The negotiation and navigation between multiple cultural identities shape characters' sense of belonging. In this study, *The Namesake* closely aligns with Naficy's concept of accented cinema. The film emphasizes everyday experiences of the diasporic characters. The experiences of migration, memory and cultural negotiations are visualised accurately in the film. The realistic style of the movie focuses on personal narrative contribution to a sense of authenticity.

Comparatively, *The Mistress of Spices* engages with the themes of diaspora but does not fully embody the characteristics of accented cinema. The film emphasises a single theme of the source text and fantasises about the story. Its reliance on fantasy and visual symbolization shifts the focus from the lived experiences of the characters. This results in a more symbolic and experimental representation of diaspora compared to both the film's source text and *The Namesake*.

Naficy's framework is particularly useful for analysing the influence of adaptation techniques in the portrayal of diaspora. It highlights the importance of realism, material conditions and emotional depth in representing diasporic identity.

Cultural Identity and Diaspora

In the study of diaspora representation, the concept of cultural identity is primary. The foundation of diaspora starts with cultural identity, differences in the experience of homeland versus the host land. Stuart Hall offers a foundational perspective by arguing that identity is not fixed. evolving. Identity is a dynamic process of becoming (Hall). According to hall, cultural identity is shaped by history, memory and representation and is constantly evolving. Hall distinguished two ways of understanding identity: identity as being and identity as becoming. The first is shaped by shared cultural heritage, and the latter is shaped constantly by transformation; the more you grow, the more layers you add to what you are becoming. This concept is used in the case of Gogol Ganguli in *The Namesake*, where his identity is shaped by lived experiences; this can be called his identity as becoming, and his primary identity based on cultural roots is his identity of being.

Diasporic identity is characterised by hybridity, negotiation and multiplicity, as explained by Bhabha and Hall in their insights on cultural identity formation. Individuals living in diaspora often navigate between different cultural contexts, creating identities that are rich but also conflicting at the same time. These hybrid identities of a diasporic space are neither entirely rooted in the homeland nor fully assimilated into the host land culture. In cinematic representation, these complexities present a significant challenge for the filmmaker. They must find ways to depict internal conflict, cultural negotiations and shifts within the limited timeframe and structure of the visual storytelling. In *The Namesake*, identity is portrayed as evolving, where each character has the opportunity to reflect on lived experiences. Gogol's journey reflects Hall's concept of becoming, as he navigates between acceptance and rejection of his cultural heritage. Ashima's adjustments in the host land show the true nature of hybridisation, as she paired her Bengali saris and Bengal with overcoats. These examples show how filmmakers can capture the fluidity of identity through their narrative and visual techniques. On the contrary, *The Mistress of Spices* tends to simplify the identity. The film presented identity as fixed and highly symbolic in nature. The presentation of cultural elements as exotic and mystical reduced the impact of the lived experiences of the characters. The film's focus on external elements, such as magic and romance, undercuts the internal negotiation and cultural complexities of the characters. This simplification leads to a thin representation of diasporic identity.

Adaptation Techniques

In addition to theoretical frameworks, there is a significant use of various adaptation techniques as analytical tools in this study. These techniques serve as the basis for comparing

the two films and understanding how the meaning is constructed. The following techniques helped in analysing the impact of their use in movie adaptation on diaspora representation as well. The techniques used in the study are:

- (i) Narrative Compression
- (ii) omission and selection
- (iii) addition and transformation
- (iv) narrative restructuring
- (v) visual storytelling and symbolism.

These techniques form the core of comparative analysis in later chapters. This examines how each film used these strategies to highlight diasporic identity. The study highlights the relationship between adaptation and representation.

Conclusion

These observations have established the theoretical foundation for the study. By examining key concepts in adaptation theory, accented cinema and cultural identity, the analysis of each film can be carried out. By moving beyond fidelity (Stam) and notions that adaptation is a mere imitation of the literary source. The study emphasises the importance of adaptation techniques in shaping the cinematic meaning of the adapted source. The framework provided by Hutcheon, Naficy, and Hall allowed a deeper understanding of how films represent diaspora and identity. These theories will be applied in the following chapters to analyse *The Namesake* and *The Mistress of Spices*, and to compare their use of adaptation strategies. Ultimately, the theoretical framework supports the central argument of this dissertation: that adaptation is a dynamic process as well as interpretive, through which meaning, identity and cultural experiences can be constructed and represented.

The Namesake

The Namesake (2003) by Jhumpa Lahiri is a diasporic novel that explores the complexities of identity, migration and cultural belonging. The story is set between India and the United States. The narration is focused on the emotional and psychological journey of Gogol Ganguli, a second-generation immigrant struggling between inherited traditions and contemporary realities.

The story was later transformed into a text-to-screen by Mira Nair in 2006 under the same title. While the film remains central to the novel's storyline, it reshaped and compressed the novel's expansive exploration of identity and diaspora. In *The Namesake*, Nair used various adaptation techniques such as narrative compression, restructuring, omission and others to her advantage. While moulding the literary vastness to a limited timeframe, these techniques helped in retaining the thematic core of the source text.

Adaptation as a process involves complex elements. The streamlined transfer of a story depends on these techniques. Adaptation is not merely a story transfer from words to visuals; in fact, adaptation reinterprets and reshapes a story and its narrative from one established medium to another through cinematic techniques. *The Namesake* stands out for its balanced and sensitive approach to adaptation. Nair did not radically transform the source text into a film. She uses a set of controlled techniques to achieve the final result. Adaptation techniques such as Narrative compression, omission, visual symbolism and restructuring are woven to produce a wholesome impact of clear meaning and identity representation. These techniques helped Nair to preserve the emotional depth, plot complexities, and diasporic themes of the novel. *The Namesake* exemplifies a mode of adaptation that prioritises fidelity to the emotional soul of the source text rather than the visual imitation of written words. Therefore, the adaptation of *The Namesake* achieves a balance between cinematic efficiency and literary depth.

The Mistress of Spices

The Mistress of Spices (2005), directed by Paul Mayeda Berges, is an adaptation of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's novel of the same name. The story is centred on Tilo, a mystical figure who uses spices with unique properties to heal and guide members of the Indian Diaspora. The novel is a blend of realism and mystical cultural symbolism. The film reshaped the narrative significantly through the combination of various techniques. Compression, simplification and transformation are a few of them. Unlike Mira Nair's style of restrained and serious faithful approach to film adaptation, *The Mistress of Spices* demonstrates a more transformative mode of adaptation. *The Mistress of Spices* altered the source text to fit cinematic expectations. The core of a novel lies in the depth of emotions, but in contrast, the commercial nature of cinema demands more focus on romance, desire, visual spectacle and narrative accessibility.

Linda Hutcheon's theory of adaptation is relevant here. She explained and emphasised that adaptation is reinterpretation. Adaptation may involve significant changes in tone, genre and emphasis (Hutcheon). However, the extent of transformation and selection of the degree to which a film deviates from the source text is yet to be determined. From the perspective of Hamid Naficy's concept of accented cinema, the film uses different techniques to stay relevant during adaptation. If we talk about the representation of themes and a film's engagement with capturing thematic meaning, then this kind of visual representation becomes necessary. For representing the diasporic themes in *The Mistress of Spices*, a lot of visual symbolism and stylisation is favoured over experiential depth. Stuart Hall's notion of identity as fluid and constructed is only partially realised during adaptation. The film reduces complex identity into symbolic forms.

This leads to the argument that while *The Mistress of Spices* employs a range of adaptation techniques, including omission, compression and visual symbolism, similar to *The Namesake*, these techniques flatten the narrative complexity of narrative. The aestheticisation of diasporic themes resulted in a visualisation that is engaging but thematically limited.

Comparative Analysis

This research studies the comparative analysis of the influence of various adaptation techniques used in *The Namesake* and *The Mistress of Spices* on the representation of diasporic identity. Both films are based on diasporic literary texts and employ different uses of techniques in translating the source text into cinema.

Drawing on the theoretical framework of Linda Hutcheon, Hamid Naficy and Stuart Hall, this chapter argues that adaptation techniques have a significant influence on shaping the representation of diasporic identity. *The Namesake* employs the controlled use of adaptation techniques that preserve the emotional depth and cultural impact of the source text. *The Mistress of Spices*, however, relies heavily on the transformative and stylised strategies of movie adaptation. This certainly simplifies and aestheticizes diasporic identity in the visual outcome. The above section explores how the different uses of the same technique can impact the representation of diasporic identity in a film adaptation.

Narrative Compression: Selective Versus Excessive

The technique of narrative compression is used in both adaptations, yet the nature and outcome differ significantly in *The Namesake* and *The Mistress of Spices*. In *The Namesake*, compression is selective. It has a purpose-driven approach. The film condenses Lahiri's novel while preserving key thematic narrative arcs. This aligns with Hutcheon's idea of adaptation as a process of reinterpretation rather than mere reduction (Hutcheon). The film uses montages to condense similar themes and the visualised growth of characters. This technique made the film more time-friendly and entertaining. The film maintains coherence and emotional depth by focusing on the essential moments (selective moments) of Gogol's life. This not only compressed the story in a limited timeframe but also reduced the repetition of the same message. This wise use of narrative compression makes *The Namesake* a prime achievement in film adaptations.

In contrast, *The Mistress of Spices* demonstrates excessive narrative compression. The film significantly reduced the complexities of Divakaruni's narrative. Multiple character arcs were condensed. The diasporic experiences attached to these characters were selectively reduced. The plot was over-simplified. The simplification of the storyline resulted in a loss of thematic richness. The loss of narrative strength reflects on the visual depth of the outcome. Characters were not given enough context to justify their lived

experiences. From Hall's perspective, identity is shaped through multiple experiences, such as lived, collective and historical (Hall). The reduction of these experiences limits the representation of diasporic identity. In contrast, *The Namesake* preserves its multiplicity, and it is reflected in the film.

Thus, it is safe to say that the selective use of compression enhances the diasporic meaning in the film adaptation, whereas the excessive use of narrative compression can diminish the entire experience.

Omission and Narrative Focus

Omission is an adaptation technique that acts differently in the two films. Omission reveals contrasting adaptation strategies in *The Namesake* and in *The Mistress of Spices*. In *The Namesake*, omission is functioning as a strategic tool of adaptation. It is used productively by the director. The film removed minor subplots and similar thematic arcs to compensate for the cinematic limitations. This omission helps in retaining the central narrative of identity formation. This results in a focused storyline that is emotionally engaging and moves coherently.

In *The Mistress of Spices*, omission acts as a tool of reduction. It is used excessively to reduce several plots of the story and the themes attached to them. This leads to the narrative simplification of the plot. The use of excessive omission and removal of multiple diasporic voices reduced the film's scope. This strategy shifted the focus towards a limited set of experiences. As Hutcheon notes, omissions are interpretive choices that shape meaning (Hutcheon). In this case, these omissions become the narrowing of narrative range and destruction of meaning. The movie becomes singular in nature due to excessive simplification of the plot.

Naficy emphasises the importance of multiplicity and fragmentation in diasporic cinema (Naficy). The lack of such multiplicity in *The Mistress of Spices* weakens the representation of diaspora. This technique of omission sharpens the diasporic representation in *The Namesake* but restricts its complexities in *The Mistress of Spices*. Therefore, one can argue that the selective and controlled use of omission emphasises the meaning in diasporic film adaptation. Whereas the excessive use of this technique can dilute the harmony of the film adaptation.

Addition and Genre Transformation

Addition is a unique tool of adaptation for movies. It can help directors to visualise complex aspects of the literary source meaningfully. In the case of *The Namesake* and *The Mistress of Spices*, the major point of difference lies in the use of addition. *The Namesake* employs minimal additions. This helps adaptation in maintaining the fidelity to the themes, tones, and effect of the literary source. The film focuses on realism and emotional continuity

by avoiding unnecessary alterations. As a result, the film adaptation became engaging. In contrast, *The Mistress of Spices* introduced significant additions, particularly in the form of a romantic narrative. This addition makes the movie singular and a less engaging outcome. This shift reflects a transformation in genre as well. It is slightly different from the source text and focuses on the magical romance and fantasy. While Hutcheon acknowledges that movies can be transformative, the extent to which they alter the narrative's original focus. In *The Mistress of Spices*, the selection and addition of a single romantic plot diminished the other parts of the storyline.

From Hall's perspective, identity is shaped through cultural and historical contexts (Hall). By heavily relying on romance, *The Mistress of Spices* shifts attention away from these contexts. It presented the identity as individualised and less socially grounded. This leads to the question of extent; minimal addition can preserve and enhance the thematic integrity and cultural representation in a film adaptation. Whereas the excessive addition can redirect the narrative focus and limit multidimensional aspects of the adaptations.

Visual Storytelling: Realism Versus Stylistic

Visual storytelling is the core of any film adaptation. It creates a visual interest in the already known plot. It represents one of the most contrasting differences between these two films. *The Namesake* employs a realistic visual technique. It is subtle and natural in flow. The film uses everyday spaces and a domestic setting to understand the thematic depth of the storyline. The movie uses symbolism to bring literary sources to life. This approach aligns with diasporic experiences, as Naficy's emphasis on lived experiences should be reflected in diasporic films. The film's visualisation authenticates identity representation and supports the subtle depth of dimensions in film adaptation. By contrast, *The Mistress of Spices* relies on the stylisation technique of visual storytelling. The use of explicit visual symbolism kept the movie away from realism. Through the use of spices and magical elements. The film becomes more fantasy-based rather than magic-realistic. The approach is visually appealing and often prioritises spectacle over depth. Therefore, the overall thematic impact felt short and hidden for a good portion of the movie. Naficy's concept of accented cinema emphasises realism and material conditions in a movie adaptation. The stylisation in *The Mistress of Spices* creates a sense of artificiality. The representation of cultural elements is used as an aesthetic component rather than a lived experience or practice. This reduced the diasporic representation scope in the film. This brings out the impact of realism and stylisation on the diaspora representation. Realism focuses on the authentic representation and actualisation of the diasporic experiences, whereas the stylisation brings out the beautification and exoticization of the deep diasporic themes.

Characterisation: Depth Versus Simplification

The different techniques lead to a variety in the outcome of a film adaptation. Characterisation plays a crucial role when it comes to differentiating between selected works. The use of characterisation in *The Namesake* and *The Mistress of Spices* influences the diasporic identity representation. In *The Namesake*, characters are complex in terms of psychology and external environment. These layers are visualised with the help of expression, styling and lived experiences of each character. Gogol's internal conflict and Ashima's emotional journey are presented with unique nuances. The reflection of Hall's concept of identity as evolving is evident throughout the film. The shifts and progress of each character do not feel isolated but collective, which is the sign of successful characterisation. In *The Mistress of Spices*, characters are simplified. The deduction of layers impacted the overall feel of the character's experiences. The character becomes highly symbolic rather than realistic. Tilo's portrayal as a mystical figure does not allow her to establish an identity with unique talents, skills and abilities. Her full development remains ambiguous. This reduction limits the audience's engagement and connection with her identity. The contrast reflects two different approaches to the same technique, which resulted in different outcomes for both movies. The use of deep characterisation and natural flow of character in *The Namesake* leads to preservation of complex themes and narrative of diasporic identity. On the other hand, over-simplified characterisation and prioritising narrative over depth leads to less dynamic outcome in *The Mistress of Spices*. Hence, it can be argued that complex characterisation helps in forming deeper identity representation in diasporic film adaptation. whereas simplification limits the scope for the development of characters by prioritising simplification over depth.

Cultural Representation: Authenticity Versus Exoticization

Two films are individual entities, which cannot be termed superior or inferior to one another. As Chapman, in his groundbreaking essay "*What Novels Can Do That Films Can't and vice versa*", explains, the comparison between novels and films is not something we can judge solely by fidelity. Therefore, the course, effect, and agenda of two films in a similar genre can differ. In *The Namesake* and *The Mistress of Spices*, comparison is not about success or production of authentic cinema; here, the comparison is about the use of certain techniques to bring out the best possible outcome. In this list, cultural representation is a crucial area of comparative analysis for *The Namesake* and *The Mistress of Spices*.

The Namesake presents culture as lived experiences. By integrating rituals, language, food, domestic space and family values into the narrative, the collective nature of the culture is presented in the film. This approach aligns with Hall's and Naficy's emphasis on authenticity and everyday lived experiences in diaspora. In contrast, *The Mistress of Spices* took this approach second. The film often presents culture as a visual spectacle. Various cultural elements such as spices, characters and customs are stylised. They are detached from

social contexts, which creates a sense of exoticization. Hall's theory of representation emphasises the cultural shaping of identity through meaning and context (Hall). By removing the community's crucial background context, the film reduced culture to the surface-level imagery. The cultural representation in this case is pushed behind romantic fantasy. Therefore, it is non-negotiable in both literary and visual media that cultural representation takes a backdrop. The exoticization reduces cultural depth and meaning formation.

Adaptation and True Representation of Diaspora

The comparative analysis of *The Namesake* and *The Mistress of Spices* reveals that adaptation techniques are not a mere tool of making adaptation films; they are beyond that. These technical choices are ideological decisions and representational tone of the film. By drawing on Hutcheon, it becomes evident that both films reinterpret their source texts, but they do so by choosing fundamentally different ways (Hutcheon).

The Namesake uses adaptation as a process of translation. This preserves the emotional and thematic core of Lahiri's novel. *The Mistress of Spices*, on the other hand, adopts a more transformative approach. This prioritises accessibility and visual appeal over psychological depth. From Naficy's perspective, *The Namesake* aligns more accurately with the various characteristics of accented cinema. The film represents diaspora as a lived and collective experience rather than an exotic visualisation. As Naficy explained, diasporic identity is shaped by memory, displacement and everyday practices (Naficy). In contrast, these elements are missing from *The Mistress of Spices*. The experimental approach of the film leads to a stylised adaptation rather than a realistic one. Hall's theory further highlights the difference in identity representation. *The Namesake* presents identity as fluid and evolving. This reflects in the characterisation of Ashima. In *The Mistress of Spices*, the identity is fixed into simplified forms (Hall). In the case of Tilo, her character becomes a mere exotic symbol rather than a developed individual. This leads to the differences between cultural representations in diasporic identities.

Conclusion

The comparative analysis of *The Namesake* and *The Mistress of Spices* demonstrate a unique understanding of accented cinema. The effectiveness of adaptation techniques highly depends on how they are adapted rather than what is adapted. *The Namesake* employs controlled and focused use of adaptation techniques. This helped preserve narrative depth and authenticity of the source text. The result is a rich representation of diasporic identity. In contrast, *The Mistress of Spices* uses a transformative, surface-level approach that leads to a stylised and simplified representation of diasporic identity. The simplified use of these techniques resulted in an aestheticized cultural experience and less dynamic visualisation of the source text.

Ultimately, the contrast between the two films underscores the importance of adaptation techniques. The various techniques help in shaping cinematic meaning. By examining these differences, this highlights how adaptation can either enhances or diminish the representation of diaspora. Depending on the choices of filmmaker, the meaning can be reshaped.

Summary and Findings

This research paper examines how adaptation techniques shape the cinematic representation of diasporic identity through a comparative study of *The Namesake* and *The Mistress of Spices*. The individual analysis of both films reveals various hidden impacts of not-so hidden techniques used by Mira Nair and Paul Mayeda Berges. Following the one-on-one analysis, the comparative study of selected movies reveals that adaptation is not merely a technical process. Adaptation is a creative and interpretive independent art form that significantly influences the narrative meaning and cultural representation.

The study demonstrates that *The Namesake* delivers a controlled and faithful adaptation strategy. Faithful not in terms of accuracy, but also in capturing the soul of the literary source in a different medium. The film adaptation shows remarkable use of various techniques, which proved to be in favour of the outcome. The techniques of adaptation, such as narrative compression, strategic omission, subtle symbolism and visual storytelling, lead to a complex characterisation and successful outcome. These techniques preserve the emotional depth and thematic richness of the source text. This combines to produce a rich cultural representation, loyal to the novel as well. The authentic representation of diasporic identity makes *The Namesake* a unique example of cultural preservation in visual art form. In contrast, the techniques employed by Berges in *The Mistress of Spices* are more transformative than controlled. *The Mistress of Spices* demonstrates a lucid and stylised approach to adaptation film-making. This involves extensive compression, narrative simplification, addition of romantic elements and over-reliance on visual spectacle. This all combines to produce a less complex characterisation in *The Mistress of Spices*. These techniques surely increase the cinematic appeal, but this also results in a reduction of narrative complexities in the outcome. The techniques traded cultural representation for aestheticization and realistic beauty for a fantasised world.

Comparative Insights

The comparative analysis of *The Namesake* and *The Mistress of Spices* highlight a fundamental difference between the two films. *The Namesake* represents diaspora as an evolving experience shaping characters in the movie. On the other hand, *The Mistress of Spices* presents diaspora as a symbolic construct. It exoticised rather than internalised. This difference underscores the importance of adaptation techniques in shaping the authenticity

of representation. The narrative structure and characters prove how different techniques can influence the depth and meaning in adapted movies.

Theoretical Implications

The study involves an analysis of two movies, which are based on two diasporic literary sources, respectively. Therefore, it becomes necessary to intersect both the natures of diaspora and adaptation. The application of Hamid Naficy's concept of accented cinema reveals that *The Namesake* is a successful example of diaspora filmmaking. It aligns with the characteristics of Naficy's framework for diasporic adaptations. *The Namesake* emphasises the lived experience, memory and cultural symbols in an authentic light. The other selected work, "*The Mistress of Spices*", diverges from Naficy's model of accented cinema. The emphasis on the stylisation pushes the extent of transformation far away. Similarly, Stuart Hall's theory of cultural identity places an important role in understanding this intermingling of diasporic identity in filmmaking. Hall's theory defines identity as a process of becoming. It is something that is constantly changing and evolving with time and place. This dynamic and evolving nature is portrayed in *The Namesake*. This simplified nature of cultural representation through characters and narrative is missing in *The Mistress of Spices'* visualised version, which limits the complexities of depth in the literary source.

Conclusion of the Study

The study concludes that the success of diasporic film adaptation lies not only in its fidelity alone but in its ability to balance transformation with thematic depth and integrity. Adaptation techniques such as compression, addition and visual storytelling play a crucial role in identity construction, narrative understanding and characterisation. The contrast between works like *The Namesake* and *The Mistress of Spices* demonstrates that adaptation is a powerful tool. The proper use of adaptation Techniques can either deepen or diminish the representation of diaspora. The effectiveness of this representation depends on the filmmaker. They retain the emotional and cultural essence of the source text while adapting it to the visual medium. The use of tools and techniques brings our differences and variety in outcomes.

Suggestions for Further Research

Future research may further explore the techniques and themes of Mira Nair's works. A comparative study of diasporic cinema across different cultures. The larger part of movie adaptation depends on the audience's reaction and expectation. In that light, one can explore the role of the audience in shaping adaptation strategies. It will link the visual choices with the real audience experience. The intersection of adaptation with gender, class and global scenarios can easily be turned into a work of information and knowledge sharing.

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