Creative Saplings, Vol. 05, No. 09, September. 2026, **ISSN-0974-536X,** https://creativesaplings.in/

The Diasporic Imagination on Screen: Cultural Alienation and Fluid Identities in the Adaptations of Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* and Rohinton Mistry's *Such A Long Journey*

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.56062/gtrs.2026.5.9.1296

Abstract

When cinema adapts novels written by diasporic authors or those who were marginalised, it does so in a way that may alter the emotional nature of the original work. These novels, often about being separated from one's culture or heritage, can be profoundly changed when adapted to film. This paper examines several adaptations of diasporic Indian English literature into films and looks at how films use images, sound, and the physicality of an actor's body to depict cultural alienation and a fluid sense of identity. Drawing upon the theories of postcolonial diaspora, particularly the writings of Stuart Hall, Homi K. Bhabha, and Avtar Brah, and film adaptation theory helps to establish how these adaptations reshape the inner experience of diaspora after being adapted to film. Finally, this paper argues that the most successful adaptations are those that approach the diasporic condition without trying to turn what may be a long and difficult process into a neat and tidy plot point about "arrival" or "return".

Keywords: *diasporic Indian English literature, film adaptation, cultural alienation, fluid identity, postcolonial cinema.*

The feeling of homesickness is unique and cannot be healed because the person who left has become too different for them to go back to their previous place of belonging and that place doesn't exist anymore as they once remembered it. For many years now, Indian English diasporic writers have been expressing themselves through Indian English literature in an effort to reflect this condition through their work. Among the diasporic writers who establish a foundation of travel between the location they have come from and the location they have now found themselves are Jhumpa Lahiri, Rohinton Mistry, Bharati Mukherjee, and Amitav Ghosh. Their writings exist within the gap between two dimensions, the physical dimension (where they come from) and the psychological dimension (where they are now). When Indian English diasporic literature is adapted to film, the gap now assumes many different characteristics. The gap in film now possesses a reality as seen through street corners, the way modern clothes are worn differently, and the way people with different accents than everyone else address each through dialogue in a manner that does not match how they themselves use their own unique dialect when communicating with each other. The beauty of these types of films is that they show the individuality of these individuals physically. The films show the

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body, as brown and accented, while at the same time being overdressed for the wrong event and underdressed for the correct event. The cinematic representation of those individuals' bodies is where their diasporic experience is represented within the context of film and reason why "Indian English Diasporic Literature Adapted to Film" deserves its own literary film analysis beyond the literary criticism of the source material.

This study looks at feature films based on diasporic Indian English literature and how they depict the two most recurring themes or issues in the literature: cultural alienation and fluidity of identity. Cultural alienation in the text relates to social isolation of immigrants, and also speaks to a deeper sense of feeling out of alignment with any available cultural framework. In other words, the immigrant is neither completely Indian nor completely Western and is therefore not fully accessible for either cultural group to interpret. Fluidity of identity demonstrates an ongoing, often painful process that diasporic subjects use to create a sense of self from the disconnected pieces of multiple cultural legacies.

There are four main components of this paper. The first part presents an overview of the landscape of diasporic Indian English literature and the relationship between diasporic literature and filmmaker's interpretations of the same literature through the film medium. Secondly, this section identifies theoretical tools that will help in the analysis of diaspora on film. Third, the paper uses specific examples of film adaptations to provide a close reading of the way each filmmaker interprets alienation and negotiation of identity in each respective work. Finally, the conclusion discusses the strategies that filmmakers utilize to tell diasporic stories through the medium of film.

Emerged as a distinct genre of Indian-English literature, diasporic Indian English literature has its origins in the latter half of the 20th century. This literature has emerged in large part due to the movement of people that occurred as a result of Partition and Independence and later from the migration of people to Britain, North America, and other countries for work. The concept of "diaspora," is complicated by theorists who resist the concept of diaspora as being solely defined by geographical movement. Stuart Hall contends that the identity of the diasporic subject is created through the experience of narrative and representation as opposed to being located in some original ancestral homeland. He describes identity as being "a 'production,' which is never complete, always in process" (Hall 392). Thus, Hall argues that a diasporic subject has no pure origin to which they can return, only the ongoing production of their identity in relation to the experiences of difference (392-93).

Homi K. Bhabha's theory of the "third space" has had an equally profound effect on scholarship. For Bhabha, meaning is not simply conveyed or transmitted from one geographic

location to another; rather, meaning is created through the processes of negotiation that take place between the two parties involved in the respective cultures. That negotiation process produces hybrid forms of culture, forms that belong fully to neither party, but rather come from an in-between region that "carries the burden of the meaning of culture" (Bhabha 37). This hybrid space is not (figuratively) comfortable; the hybrid space is both a site of anxiety, but also a site of creative freedom. The writing of the diasporic Indian English literature has examined the third space using characters who cannot communicate with others without having an accent, who create food that they are used to creating for themselves but in kitchens that they are not used to using to create; and who feel the most alien/foreign to the culture in which they exist, at the exact moment when they believed that they have finally "arrived" at their destination.

Avtar Brah argues that "diaspora space" is an additional conceptual lens through which to understand how the impacts of migration or diaspora not only include the new life experiences of those who migrate, but also includes how the lives of people who were already from that land are now impacted by those who have settled there. Brah writes that diaspora space "as a conceptual category is 'inhabited' not only by those who have migrated and their descendants but equally by those who are constructed and represented as indigenous" (Brah 181). The alienation experienced by individuals who are part of the larger diaspora exists in the context of the different socio-cultural settings they find themselves in after migrating (Brah 208-09). For this reason, cinema has a unique role in presenting stories of diaspora, as it enables representation of two individuals sharing the same cinematic screen while simultaneously offering a distinctively dissimilar experience of culture. There is not as much literature dealing with Indian diasporic films and film adaptations of diasporic literature (particularly in South Asia), compared with the criticism of the source works. Jigna Desai asserts that South Asian cinema that is diasporic is situated "beyond Bollywood" where it is only mildly connected to both mainstream Indian cinema and independently produced, Western films (Desai 4-5). Writers such as Rachel Dwyer and Jyotika Virdi have examined how popular cinema has constructed Indianness in film; however, the question of adaptation from the literary source has been less heavily researched (Dwyer 12; Virdi 8).

As already noted, the most significant scholarly research that specifically addresses the diasporic Indian experience in scholarship has focused on Lahiri's fiction. *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999) was published as her first collection of short stories and was awarded the Pulitzer Prize, establishing a diasporic Indian perspective for American readers. *The Namesake* (2003), her first novel, was adapted into a feature film by Mira Nair in 2006. Critical responses to the adaptation have included a broad range of assessments from Hamid Naficy's general framework for accented cinema to specific analyses of how the film adapted

Lahiri's inner world into visual form (Naficy 22). The adaptation itself has not received the same level of scholarly attention in terms of how the process of adaptation affects the diasporic imagination that informs the literary original.

The first step in comprehending the text of Indian diasporic English literature is to ascertain structurally what this writing represents within itself. Many of the well-known (canonical) works of Indian diasporic English literature will establish a rhythmic pattern commencing with displacement, be it through leaving or arriving in a new location, settlement and then adjusting to life in another country or location, however, as one reads through (and although established structurally as a representational pattern) is that such patterns do not develop in obvious linear sequences as chronology does. Memory takes priority over chronological order. The homeland (i.e. the country from where the character(s) is/are) is always interwoven into the presence (i.e. time) of where the character(s) currently are or are presently situated. Characters in Indian diasporic English literature continually exist within two times (i.e., in their current life and the life before/making their way to it).

Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* is an excellent representation of this concept, in that it begins with Ashoke and Ashima Ganguli's exodus from Calcutta to the U.S. through to Cambridge, Massachusetts and continues with tracing Gogol's identity through both namesakes and what meaning he has as an individual because of his identity (Lahiri 25-28). Lahiri's writing style is deliberative and methodical; she emphasises the equal significance of both kitchen smells and the death of a family member. The impact of Lahiri's writing is most appreciated when the audience considers the accumulated impact of thirty years of a family's existence concurrently, recognising what has been sacrificed as well as what has been gained.

Film operates on different principles than literature. Given that a particular film has two hours of cinema, the film has to choose the moments that it will tell (or show) rather than have a series of moments spread over many pages of text. The film *The Namesake*, adapted from the novel written by Jhumpa Lahiri, is a good example of how film makes particular choices that can be understood as offering a different kind of understanding for the viewer. In the film, the use of the body of Kal Penn (who is playing the character Gogol) serves as a means of communicating a sense of cultural dislocation, since Penn's body demonstrates a different way of taking up space in both the setting of his Indian family and in a college setting. Thus, rather than being a failure of adaptation, the use of Penn as a physical connector for the film adapts Lahiri's hundreds of pages of prose to the immediacy of an image through a new kind of intelligence.

For example, diasporic literature often manifests itself as a series of what might be referred to as distributed interiorities (i.e. the interior lives of characters are distributed across multiple entities and objects). The interiority of characters is lived out through a variety of entities including: objects, rituals, sensory memories and the testimonies of other characters However, film must find a way to compress this distribution or find a way to translate this distribution into a meaningful visual experience. The choices made in translating the original diasporic experience into a visual language provide insight into how the filmmaker has interpreted the diasporic experience.

Cultural separation (or alienation) is very difficult to convey visually on film. In novels you can simply go inside the character's head and identify how they feel at an event where their social codes are unreadable. In film you must find a way to convey what is happening inside of the character, using visual signs. Directors who work with films depicting the experience of distance have created different ways to express cultural alienation, which also tells you something about the filmmaker's vision.

Mira Nair's *The Namesake* uses the style of framing and staging as the principal tools that identify cultural alienation. Early scenes in India are very warm (highly populated), have many generations present, and communicate the sense of many people living a common life (i.e., there is a shared physical and auditory experience). In contrast, the scenes in America are very isolated through the use of frame, i.e., there are many more "empty" spaces in the scene that make the actors look isolated versus free. The sound is also very different between the two locations. The sound of the Indian scenes provide a lot of ambient sound, whereas the American sounds are very clinical and full of mechanical sounds.

The visual grammar of alienation is an effective way of representing displacement but there is a danger associated with allowing it to take on an aesthetic quality that makes it look more beautiful than painful. Lahiri's narrative is quite careful to depict alienation as an experience of discomfort instead of a sense of longing to be depicted in a picturesque manner; for example, for Ashima, being a foreign national means living with "a sort of lifelong pregnancy" (Lahiri 49), a continual but low-level discomfort rather than a single dramatic wound. When Ashima is at her most depressed in the film she is photographed by the director as a way for her to be shown as being beautiful rather than emotionally sad; to do so will cause the audience not to experience her suffering but rather to appreciate her beauty when they are viewing the scene. This is an ongoing tension found in the adaptation of narratives associated with diasporic literature; when writers and directors attempt to make suffering visually compelling, they tend to romanticize that suffering to a greater extent than what the source text originally did.

In contrast to Mira Nair's work, Deepa Mehta's method of cinematic adaptations is different in approach. The film *Heaven on Earth* (2008) is not simply a direct adaptation from one literary text; rather it draws on much of the same literary influences but presents alienation from another point of view. The character of Chand in Heaven is transported to Canada as the bride of an Indian man and is immediately removed from her previous culture into her new culture within a domestic space that visually represents a kind of prison. Mehta utilizes the physical limitation of the visual frame of the film to depict Chand's diminishing world, which steadily narrows as the film continues. Mehta provides an aggressive use of filmic space that does not suggest to the viewer that Chand's alienation is beautiful, but rather compels them to feel a part of the conditions of her alienation.

The differing styles of these two films raises an underlying question concerning for whom these films are intended. Nair's film caters to a large art-house audience that includes but is not limited to the Indian diaspora. Nair has created a visually warm film that also depicts beauty within pain, which allows a cross-cultural audience to relate to. Conversely, Mehta's film is less conducive to such accessibility and is more difficult for an audience member to view, and more abrasive in its portrayal of alienation.

For people who are 'diasporic' (people who are from one country but live in another) — like immigrants who leave for economic or political reasons — an identity of fluidity can serve as a survival strategy since they usually experience alienation. Therefore, most diasporic individuals don't just have two cultural identities at the same time; they possess a third cultural identity (that is, one exists in between two cultures). Thus, most diasporic individuals possess a distinct ability to navigate through multiple cultural contexts and switch back and forth from one cultural identity to another (i.e., the ability to create multiple versions of themselves). This third cultural identity consists of both power (or the ability to define oneself) but also serves as an exhaustion process (because navigating multiple cultures requires an enormity of effort). South Asian English diasporic literature has done an especially good job of illustrating this exhaustiveness.

As a result, fluid identity presents a significant representational challenge for filmmakers. Most films tend to adhere to traditional character arcs, and even films that utilize non-traditional structure typically provide their protagonists with an explicit character growth arc. In contrast, the fluidity of identity for diasporic individuals does not follow a linear path but instead oscillates between two different cultural identities. Consequently, what seems to have been a resolution of the diasporic individual's identity crisis at the beginning of the third act may become undone by a phone call they receive from home during the third act of the film (thereby creating ambiguity).

Lahiri's novel and Nair's film treat identity in terms of both Ashoke/Ashima and Gogol. Gogol's identity crisis is easier to portray from the perspective of the name he was given at birth. While the name carries with it a connection to his father's near-death experience of surviving a train crash in India (Lahiri 17-20), it has no meaning to him in America except for embarrassment. The film marks a pivotal moment when he chooses to change his name to Nikhil; however, the honesty of the film shows that this decision has not solved his identity crisis. He is still Gogol. The act of changing his name to Nikhil is simply a gesture to create a new identity, but his body and memory do not support the new identity he has tried to create for himself.

This is one of the film's most clever translations from the printed word to the screen. Lahiri employs the name as a shaping device throughout her entire novel. In the film, Nair condenses the scope of the name over a wide variety of scenes but retains the meaning of the name; that identity in the diaspora is not something that can be solved, but rather a state of being (Lahiri 100-02).

Rohinton Mistry's book *Such A Long Journey* (1991) was made into a film by Sturla Gunnarsson in 1998. Both the book and the film take place mostly in Bombay, although Mistry's own position as a writer of Indian background living in Canada adds a different dimension to both mediums. This adds an extra challenge when adapting Mistry's work. One example of this challenge can be seen in his character Gustad Noble, the main character of the book/film. While Gustad is not a diasporic person in terms of geography, he does have some diasporic characteristics because of his feeling of disconnection to his culture and sense of belonging to a now non-existent Bombay (Mistry 12-14). The film portrays this by showing Gustad's connection to physical space, specifically the use of the wall in front of his apartment building as both a divider and a place for him to identify his status within his culture.

The longer history of displacing people than one scene can display is supplied by the novel. Gustad's grandfather was the creator of the family's furniture establishment, "Noble & Sons," which the novel calls "the finest bookstore in the country"; the family's continued decline begins when Gustad's father gives control of the enterprise to an unreliable younger sibling while hospitalized, and the establishment is subsequently forced into bankruptcy (Mistry 97). Gustad is able to salvage a small number of pieces, specifically a writing desk and a china cupboard, prior to the arrival of the bailiff; these pieces function for him much as inherited recipes and saris function in diasporic fiction more broadly, as the material residue of a life that can be touched but not returned to. Brah's notion of diaspora space is useful again here, since it lets the critic describe displacement as something that rupture and downward mobility can produce as readily as a border crossing, allowing Gustad to experience an unfamiliar

future without ever leaving Bombay (Brah 181). Gunnarsson's film compresses this entire history into a few lines of dialogue and a single held shot of the desk in the Noble flat, which means that on screen, Gustad's melancholy has to be carried almost entirely by Roshan Seth's performance rather than by the accumulated weight of family history the novel supplies.

The wall outside Khodadad Building embodies this same idea in microcosm. Early in the novel it serves merely as an object of public shame; Gustad muses obliquely that "the wall is not a public latrine," while his neighbours continue to treat it as such (Mistry 74). To remedy the situation, he persuades a passing pavement artist (a graduate of Comparative Religion) to use the wall as a canvas on which to replicate Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian, Zoroastrian, and Parsi icons so that the public will no longer show such disrespect toward the wall. Within days of making this change, the wall becomes a communal shrine that is fully owned and marked by multiple traditions, an improvised and negotiated example of the "third space" described previously. In Gunnarsson's film, the change is achieved primarily through visual composition rather than through verbal exposition; the camera returns to the wall various times in long static shots wherein numerous figures are gradually added to the wall, and the increasing relative value of the wall is communicated as visual density, i.e., as an indication of the community's contribution and commitment to the wall, rather than as something that needs to be articulated by a character.

The delicate nature of that improvised sense of sanctity is established through the events of the novel, and when viewed in relation to the 1971 war between Pakistan and India, over Bangladesh, it demonstrates why it is fragile. As the character of Gustad is pulled into the money laundering scheme of his former friend, Major Jimmy Bilimoria, due to the corrupt government, he loses his savings, his peace of mind, and very nearly his job. The final physical manifestation of the domestic and national plots comes when the municipal corporation of Bombay widens a street and demolishes the wall to do it. The painter mourning for the wall is the most clear demonstration in the novel that the wall represents something historically important, rather than just architecturally important, and Gustad understands the stakes, clearly realizing “the collapse of the wall would wreck the past and the future” (Mistry 318). Leonard Klady in his review of Gunnarsson's movie of the same name states that the director's “formal directorial style” lends this material “an objectivity” (Klady). Some of the novel's irony is lost in the filming of the story, trading it for a steadier emphasis on Gustad's decency, an emphasis that softens the political charge of the wall's demolition even as it preserves the scene itself.

The way that Nair and Lahiri treat alienation is markedly different from how Gunnarsson treats alienation through his use of cinematography. Where Nair's use of the camera is often

used to visually soften alienation to the point of offering something visually comforting, Gunnarsson employs a much more restrained, dispassionate, and unemotional style of camera work to offer Gustad no aesthetic solace in relation to Gustad's alienation since Gustad is alienated not by virtue of displacement from one country to another but by virtue of being dispossessed within his own city of birth, and Gunnarsson's visual treatment of alienation takes on an objective steadiness that refuses to romanticize it. The screenplay by Sooni Taraporevala, which is based on a novel considerably longer than Lahiri's, is challenged to condense an extraordinary amount of political and domestic material into less than two hours; therefore, the resultant film relies heavily on Seth to convey through performance alone what the novel distributes across its text: the bankruptcy, the war, and the friendship with Bilimoria. This dynamic produces a different model of fluid identity than the one Nair offers through Gogol: Gustad's identity does not fluctuate between two named cultures so much as it erodes and reconstitutes itself within a single city that keeps becoming unrecognizable around him, a version of diasporic experience that needs no airport to begin.

A unique aspect of Indian diasporic literature is how it reflects on memory; not only as a retrospective element, but also as part of what forms the character. Characters are literally made of their memories (more than physically), for example, the memory of grandma's kitchen, the particular kind of light that exists in a particular city, the sound (and knowledge) of a language (that now only exists in their physical form) that was heard as children. These are all ingredients for constructing a diasporic identity.

Cinema, like literature, has its own methods of dealing with memory. Flashbacks are one obvious way that filmmakers deal with memory, but there are other, subtler techniques, such as a camera holding an object (or person) longer in a shot, musical cues which stir emotional memories of the audiences, and a face being able to evoke multiple times at once. These techniques work particularly well for filmic depictions of diasporic narratives; because diasporas, by nature, are lived in multiple times.

The Namesake by Mira Nair utilizes this capacity as an essential theme throughout the film. It spans both space (Calcutta and Cambridge) and time (flashbacks to India). The viewer is frequently shown flashbacks to India during the action in America (usually the main sequence) and there is a very different visual style, quality, tone and colour to those flashbacks that separates them from the "current" events of the main action. Therefore, they are seen as having a level of separation between the viewer's idea of the "current" events and his/her nostalgic recollection of an Indian past. This technique risks transforming India into a fantasy projection of the immigrant's imagination rather than a true representation of a living culture.

Svetlana Boym, in her work on nostalgia, highlights the difference between "restorative" versus "reflective" nostalgia. Restorative nostalgia seeks to place back together or re-create the lost home, and thus denotes a mythic representation of the past. Reflective nostalgia does not attempt to restore the lost home, but rather recognises and accepts the loss; it lives within the loss itself and, unlike restorative nostalgia, "can be ironic and humorous" to comment on the state of its condition (Boym 49). This kind of reflective nostalgia characterizes the best examples of diasporic Indian English literature. Likewise, the best film adaptations offer a comparable product with varying degrees of success.

Nair's film represents an ongoing change on the part of both the adaptors and the adapted. This is evident when Gogol visits Calcutta after his father dies; the place he arrives at is not what his parents remember and, therefore, not what he remembers from his childhood. This is generally how the film reflects multiple times and experiences within one totality of diasporic experience.

When thinking about adaptations of diasporic material, it is necessary to confront what type of address there is for these films. Most of these films are made by diaspora communities and for diaspora communities, although they are not necessarily produced exclusively for them. The commercial parameters of international arthouse cinema (e.g., *The Namesake*) imply that these films are intended for an audience that may not have a firsthand experience with the mass of diasporic experiences they capture.

An interesting asymmetry develops as a result. Usually the creation of a diasporic literary text occurs from a vantage point of having experienced the subject matter first hand. The writer of the diasporic text will have knowledge of the subject matter through lived experience. The details of the text are very specific, and the emotional register is precise (Lahiri 5-9). This presents certain issues when adapting this fictitious work for an audience that is not familiar with the textual subject matter. There is a pressure for the outside audience to be able to understand what is happening within the fictitious work without having lived within the diasporic experience themselves.

This added pressure is shown to an extent within many of these adaptations. A common way that this pressure is expressed is through the use of voice-over. In many adaptations of diasporic literary texts, the use of voice-over narration provides a method for the outside audience to gain insight into parts of the culture involved in the fictional work that would not be of general knowledge to an non-diasporic audience. This could also give the outside audience the impression that the diasporic culture as portrayed in these adaptations is in need of a guiding point, whereas the general Western culture would not be perceived to be in need

of clarification. Hamid Naficy, who insists that "multiple displaced but situated cultures" beat at the heart of every transnational text (Naficy 6), describes this as one of the characteristic burdens of accented cinema: the diasporic subject is portrayed as exotic, characterized by a need to explain the diasporic experience to an audience who does not share the same frame of reference as the diasporic subject (Naficy 32-34).

Nair's *The Namesake* is able to handle this concept well through use of restraint; the culture is displayed without excessive explanatory detail. The film allows the audience to infer meaning based on the context of what the characters are doing — for example, performing rituals or speaking Bengali — rather than stopping to provide footnotes. The lack of footnotes respects both the audience and the culture being represented, treating Indian domestic life as self-evidently real without requiring translation into English.

The question regarding address also has a generational component to it; increasingly, diasporic Indian English literature is being written by second-generation authors, whose relationship to the 'homeland' is mediated rather than being directly remembered and, therefore, contains an ongoing element of nostalgia. In adapting such second-generational written materials, filmmakers are faced with representing a relationship to a place they have not themselves directly experienced, which is a form of post-memory (Hirsch 5-6).

Cinematic expression of post-memory as an element of a diaspora's adaptation has received less scholarly attention than other topics within this literature. The film adaptation of a source narrative where the narrator does not have direct memories of their homeland, but was shaped into who they are through their parent's and grandparent's recollections about their own homelands, must then recreate through the film's images a past that is inherited by the narrator rather than a lived past. This complicates the image depictions of the past; thus, filmmakers will employ different visual lexicons when depicting post-memory-based images, rather than live memories.

Conclusion

Films based upon Indian Diasporic literature are not merely visual portrayals or visualisations of their source material; they are culturally translated expressions of the diasporic imagination through the lens of the tools of cinema (the visible body, the frame, the soundtrack, the cut). Henceforth, the way that these films depict the conditions of belonging and unbelonging experienced by the Diaspora are fundamentally different from how the textual narrative conveys those conditions through interiority and accumulation.

The films that display the best results will be those that resist both the temptation to beautify the Diasporic pain(s) for consumable purposes; and the temptation to simplify or resolve the Diasporic identity into a clearly defined end point. Both temptations are understandable from a commercial standpoint; however, both representations compromise the integrity of the literary source material.

These films do something harder than simply offering simple endings; they let their viewers sit in the discomfort of the unresolved nature of the diasporic experience and follow characters who don't gain understanding of who they are; at the end of Nair's film, Gogol does not know who he is - he knows his father's name and he knows his own name; but he understands both names comprise him. This does not give closure, but rather it affirms the value of the artistic genre that provides the basis of this film.

The significance of studying these adaptations should not only be placed on what each adaptation contributes about the individual film or novel; it also provides insight into the process of cultural memory being transmitted and changed as it is transferred across multiple media. The increasing amount of literature produced by the Indian diaspora and the manner in which that literature enters the various screen media will only increase the urgency of exploring the questions raised here in relation to cultural memory and identity. What does a diaspora that has no homeland to reflect back on look like? How does fluidity of identity feel when fluidity itself becomes inherited? These are questions that film, at its best, is well equipped to ask, not to answer, but to hold with the seriousness they deserve.

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