

# From Pages to Screen: A Comparative Analysis of Adujeevitham: As a Novel and Film Adaptation

Ms. Hridhya Dileep<sup>1</sup>, Ms. Soya Saji<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Student, English, Kristu Jayanti University

## Abstract

A Comparative Analysis involve comparing and contrasting different aspects of literature in terms of themes, symbols, style and impact on audience. The study aims to draw a comparative analysis of Benyamin's novel Goat Days and the movie based on the same novel that depicts the challenges faced by migrants in gulf countries. The study analyses novel and movie in terms of cultural symbolism, accounting for accessibility, point of view, auditory elements, visual storytelling to state the impact on audience. In the movie all the aspects are straightforward and creates an immediate emotional effect on the audience minds but novel delves in to readers mind in a slow pace to create a personal connection compared to the movie. The study helps to understand the original text and how it is represented in the movie focusing on the comparative methodology by comparing the novel and the movie in creating an impact on the audience contributing to film studies. On the whole study paves the way for showcasing the flaws in adaptation of a novel to movie and to foreground the idea that movie appeals to a larger audience than the novel.

**Keywords:** Cultural symbolism, Comparative analysis, Accessibility

## INTRODUCTION

Goat Life is a seminal work on the migrant struggle, identity crisis, isolation and survival composed by the writer from Malayalam language Benyamin and translated in to English by Joseph Koyippally in 2012. Though the novel was published in 2008, it came out as a movie on 28 march 2024 directed by prominent Indian film director Blessy. The movie and the novel portray the harsh realities of life of migrants in gulf countries, focusing on the life of Najeeb, a migrant who moved from Kerala for the prosperities in life. Malayalam actor Prithviraj Sukumaran plays the role of Najeeb in the movie. Movie also depicts the struggle of an actor faced to fit into character to create a lasting impact on the audience. This comparative analysis aims to compare and contrast novel and film on the lines of cultural symbolism used in the novel versus film and how it creates an impact on the audience accounting to the accessibility, engagement and point of view.

Adaptation of a novel in to movie had various limitations which can lead to plot compression, character development and difference in the depiction of symbols. Blessy's movie is not the exact replica of the novel goat days. Director molds the movie to cater the audience expectations which can lead to create an impact on the wider audience. Benyamin depicts the life of an ordinary migrant and transforms his life in desert in to a universal tale of loneliness and isolation. Novel had won various awards and recognitions and post later adapted in to movie. Movie appeals to a wider range of audience than the novel. Movie

attracts people who are outside of literature background. People who are in to writing finds novel accessible than the general audience. Accessibility is a deliberate act. People who are in to reading chooses to access the novel than the non-experts. The general audience could be unaware or who deliberately chooses to not, and this becomes problematic. Movie comes out as bridging this gap through visual storytelling, music and the use of symbols to signify.

Cultural symbols can be anything thing, animals and plants that could represent the culture of the people. Goat becomes a major symbol in the novel and the movie but in a different way. In the movie all the aspects are straightforward but the novel delves in to readers mind in a slow pace to create a personal connection compared to movie. Desert signify isolation, loneliness and hardships faced by the protagonist. Imagery depicts a sign system that evokes emotions that grapple with reality.

Comparative approach is used to analyze the similarities and dissimilarities between to mediums to arrive at a better understanding. The study aims to the better understanding of the novel and the movie through a comparative methodology and qualitative approach in terms of cultural symbolism, point of view, visual story telling and auditory elements used in the movie. It highlights the creative choice of director in adaptation focusing on the narrative technique employed and the impact on audience in each form. This analysis helps to understand the text and how it is represented in the movie contributing to film studies.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Goat life is the account of a migrant worker who travels from Kerala in search of job to gulf country. The protagonist Najeeb from Arattupuzha, Alappuzha moves to Saudi Arabia along with Hakeem. In Kerala Najeeb does various kind of jobs to support his family and film depicts him digging sand from the river. His cherished dream was to work in a gulf country and sent money to support his family. After long struggle, he gets visa and reached Saudi Arabia. What followed next, becomes a turning point in his life. Najeeb and Hakim was clueless at the Riyadh airport and they were taken away by Arab whom they believed to be their sponsor.

Dr. Jisha K, and Saranya P.S in “Narratives of survival: A content analysis of Aadujeevitham (The goat Life) 2024” explores the detailed examination of plot, themes and cinematic techniques and also analyses the movie’s portrayal of migration, survival and dehumanizing experiences of migrant workers. Athisayamani in “The Theme of Alienation in Benyamin’s goat Days” focuses on the depiction of Alienated Elements to emphasize that the concept of alienation becomes part of ordinary language. Shaista Taskeen and Syed wahaj Mohsin in their paper “Dismembered Dreams: A Diasporic study of Benyamin Daniel’s Aadujeevitham” delves in to the ambivalent and anguished state of the protagonist Najeeb to explore on the issues of labor migration, alienation, nostalgia and survival in a new land. K. T Vandana in Biota “As the preserver of Life: A study of Anthropomorphism in Goat Days” focuses on the study of anthropomorphism employed at the time of turmoil and the role of Biota in preservation of his life at the time of uncertainties.

Descriptive language is used in the novel to explore Najeeb’s feeling of loss and isolation. Through visual story telling movie portrays the imagery and symbols in a direct manner amplifying the emotional response for the viewers. Character in the novel had flashbacks enhancing cultural symbols but, in the movie due to plot compression. It leads to loss of some symbolic depth to an extent but creates an immediate impact on the viewers. Movie uses auditory elements, visual storytelling and actor’s performances to create an emotional engagement but novel invites readers to meditate the complexities of cultural Symbolism. The adaptation aims to bridge cultural gaps and the Movie Aadujeevitham brings the life of a migrant to a

wider audience, making it more relatable. In the movie this can also lead to over simplification of cultural symbols than the novel.

Existing studies highlights the content analysis, post-colonial perspective but this study focus the significance of cultural Symbolism to state how both movie and novel offer distinct insights. Understanding these differences offer to the appreciation of both the mediums and prioritize the importance of cultural representation in storytelling.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Linda Hutcheon through her book “A Theory of Adaptation” explores “an adaptation is a derivation that is not derivative, a work that is second without being secondary. It is its own palimpsest”. She emphasizes that adaptations should honor the original work but also allows for new interpretations and perspectives. Adaptations are not mere copies of the original rather creative and Interpretive act that is shaped according to the new audience, often through a new medium. She argues that the practice of adaptation is central to the story telling imagination. Hutcheon further distinguishes narrative mode in to two: novel and film. The difference in the medium impact how stories are experienced. In case of Adujeevitham novel uses first person narration that allows reader’s to immerse with the protagonist inner life, whereas Film emphasizes the suffering of the migrant workers through the use of cinematography and performance.

In Adapting Goat Days in to Adujeevitham, director had used various techniques including plot compression, symbolism and point of view shifting which are shaped by the cultural context and audience expectations. These changes are deliberate to expand the story’s social relevance. This theoretical framework helps to analyze the differences between two mediums not as a flaw but as a feature of adaptation. The study uses theory of adaptation to study by framing the adaptation as a transformation, not merely a translation

## **ANALYSIS**

Goat Days explore the story of an Indian man’s experience as a migrant worker in gulf country. It explores the themes of survival, Identity and cultural dislocation. Movie strengthened its themes and message making it accessible to a wider range of audience. Analysis explore the cultural Symbolism of the book cover and movie poster, point of view employed in both mediums, cultural significance within the narratives and the impact on audience.

### **(A) Book cover and Movie poster**

#### **Book cover**

The cover page of the novel goat days is striking yet simple but represents the narratives core themes. Cover is an image of a goat on a desert, serves as the powerful symbol of protagonists struggle and survival. The earthy tones used in the design depicts the harshness of the desert and challenges that Najeeb faced in the environment. Goat depicts bondage and livelihood. They portray Najeeb’s struggle and dependence as he depends on them for his survival in Saudi Arabia. The picture depicts a man with goat’s face states that he gradually identified as a goat one among under the control of Arab. The colors used are light shades to foreground the struggle of a migrant workers to global readers.

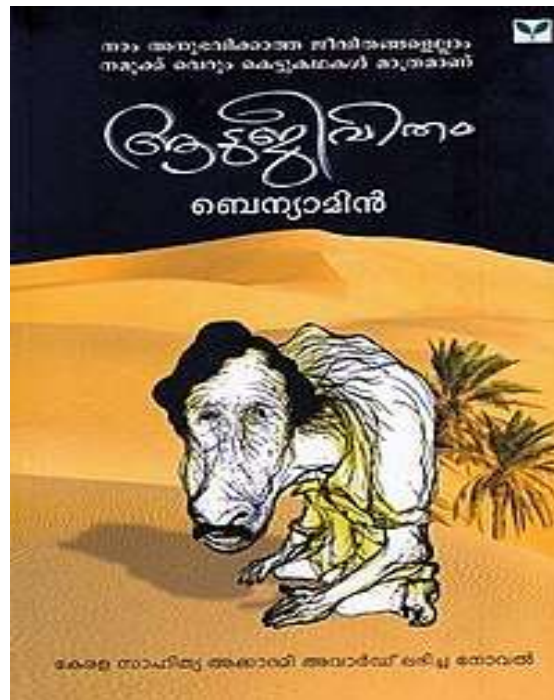


Fig 1. Cover page of the novel Goat days.



Fig 2. Poster of the movie Adujeevitham

### Movie poster

The movie adaptation poster of Adujeevitham states the similar thematic elements but through visual storytelling, enhances the impact on audience. It features Najeeb with a stark landscape background emphasizing the struggle and desolation in the environment. The presence of goat is similar, focusing on the duality of identity and also the labor he endures being as a worker and a human trapped in a system that dehumanizes. The use of orange and yellow shades in the background to signify sunlight can also be

viewed as a ray of hope, making audience think that he will be saved from the current situation. The use of light shades creates a sense of isolation and adds the emotional weight on Najeeb's journey. The visual representation states the struggles he underwent through drawing audience to an immediate emotional state of mind. Cover page of novel invites readers to meditate the complexities of cultural Symbols, on the other hand movie poster creates an immediate impact on the audience that amplify the social realities. Together the cover page of the book and the Movie poster establish a visual representation that emphasizes the core struggles and themes of the narrative.

### **(B) Point of view**

Benyamin's goat days is told from a first-person point of view inviting readers to Najeeb's thoughts, emotions and struggles. First person point fosters a deep personal connection with the character to experience his loss, hope and resilience as intimate. Through Najeeb's voice, he voices the struggles of entire migrant workers focusing on the isolation and challenges faced by the people who seeks a better life in a foreign country. The perspective also depicts the psychological trauma it created on Najeeb's life. The use of internal monologue reveals the constant conflict between his aspirations and the reality he encounters. The connection with the character fosters his plight on the readers and understanding the complexities of his emotional landscape, enhancing the reader's experience.

The movie employs visual storytelling technique that shifts to third person perspective. This view point offers a broader narrative scope that allows audience to witness the contrasting world of the protagonist's life in Kerala and the oppressive condition he faces in a gulf country. Cinematography plays a crucial role, that uses various shots to state the vastness of the desert and close shots to capture the emotional turmoil on the protagonist's life. The movies perspective shifts from first person to third person often times for creating an intimate connection with the protagonist and a more observational perspective to place his story within the context of migrant labor. This narrative technique appeals to a broader audience, allowing them to engage with the story on a multiple level to enhance the universality of Najeeb's experience.

### **(C) Cultural Symbolism**

Movie and novel are rich in cultural Symbolism that states the socio-economic realities of migrant labors. Symbolism of Goats: In goat days novel goat serves as a powerful symbol of livelihood and bondage. They represent Najeeb's work and the dependency he shared with the goats for survival. In India goats are associated with sustenance and hardship symbolizing one's connection to roots. For the protagonist, goat becomes a symbol of both his labor and his entrapment, depicting the duality of identity as a worker who suffers from the exploitation of the Arab. Najeeb names one goat with the name of his son, Nabeel and takes care him as his son. He even names other goats with the people around his locality in Kerala.

"To tell you the truth, I have often felt that goats can understand things better than some humans".(Koyippally joseph,121)

Statement depicts his connection with the goats, stating that goats understands him more than Arab. Gradually he becomes one among them. When he decides to escape he felt bad on leaving the goats, he formed a deep connection with them through these years.

"Whenever in the world I go, I will remember you as the brothers who were with me through my misery, I will always love you. It is Allah who bought me my ill fate in this masara. It is he who delivers me now. I will pray to him to release you too from this fate."( Koyippally joseph,185)

Najeeb wishes for the escape of the goat and prayed to god for their escape. As he was about to leave every goats cane beside him, depicts the connection each held together. Goats are the ones that made his

life survive in the desert. Without the goats, maybe he couldn't be alive. It also serves as a source of strength that made him move his life in the crucial circumstances.

"I came out of the masara. The goats cried out together. I didn't look back. Had I looked back, maybe I wouldn't have been able to leave that place." (Koyippally Joseph, 187)

Goats represent the protagonist's responsibility that he endures. As he works hard in harsh climatic conditions, he takes care of the goats, which symbolizes his resilience and desire to maintain a connection to his homeland. The cultural symbol states the struggle of many migrant workers in similar situations.

Desert landscape: Desert serves as a powerful symbol of desolation and hope. Its vastness and the challenges that migrants face represent the potential for transformation. It also depicts the struggles of the protagonist who faces loneliness and hardships, longing for a better life. Desert serves as a metaphor of challenges faced by migrants' workers and their pursuit of dreams, emphasizing the themes of survival and resilience. It states the protagonist's internal and external conflicts, illustrating the fight against adversity. The vastness of the desert contrasts with the characters' personal aspirations, highlighting the sense of alienation and the search for identity in a foreign country. Landscape is integral to the understanding of cultural dimensions of the narrative. Najeeb spent his hard times in the desert, but he remains loyal to his Arab master and holds his belief in God.

In the movie, cinematography captures the desert, highlighting the isolation of the protagonist's experiences. Desert landscape serves as a symbol of the journey of many migrants, focusing on the physical and emotional hardships they endured in pursuit of a better life. The desert becomes a character in both the mediums, emphasizing the beauty and brutality in the protagonist's life. In both novel and movie, desert speaks to the resilience of the human spirit.

#### **(D) Accessibility**

The accessibility of goat days novel and the movie adaptation plays a crucial role in their impact on the audience.

**Literary Accessibility:** Novel goat days employs a straightforward narrative style that makes it accessible for the readers. First person point of view invites readers to engage deeply with the protagonist's thoughts and feelings, making it approachable to those unfamiliar with the complexities of migrant labor. Novel has also been translated into various languages, which also leads to reach a wider audience to engage with its themes. Book is accessible, but the cultural nuances resonate with readers who have experienced similar struggles or are familiar with the context of labor migration. This aspect can to a greater extent limit its impact on the audience who are unfamiliar with the realities.

**Cinematic Accessibility:** Through visual storytelling, movie adaptation appeals to a wider audience than the novel. The use of auditory elements, visuals, and actor's performance creates an immediate emotional engagement with the story. The cinematography with performances draws the audience intimately to Najeeb's life, making the narrative relatable. Movie attracts the modern generation who are less interested in reading lengthy novels. The visual storytelling resonates on an emotional level, enhancing empathy and understanding among the viewers. Director had adapted the novel into movie to cater to the taste of the audience through plot compression and music. Movie is presented in a dynamic format, that expands the narratives' reach and impact on the audience.

#### **(E) Impact on the Audience**

Novel and the movie create a profound impact on their audience, resonating with various social issues.

**Social Awareness:** The novel goat days raises awareness on the plight of the migrant workers in a foreign land, emphasizing the issues of exploitation, identity struggle, and quest for dignity. Novel depicts

Najeeb's experience as realistic and focus on the hidden realities of labor migration. Through the presentation of a dynamic format novel invites readers to reflect on the systematic issues at play. Movie employs powerful visuals and performances that fosters empathy and understanding to the viewers. Representation of the protagonist's struggle serves as a remainder of the resilience and humanity to the people who remain invisible in the society.

**Emotional Resonance:** Novel and the movie connects with audience on a personal level. Najeeb's journey from hope to despair and to survival reflects the experiences of many migrant laborers who are in the similar situations. It emphasizes the sense of solidarity making the story universally appealing. Novel's use of first-person point of view allows readers to feel the protagonist pain intimately connected. Similarly, movie's use of music, visual storytelling and performance creates an immediate emotional impact drawing audience to his world. The shared emotional experience prompts the viewers to reflect on their own lives and societal structures, contributing to the struggles faced by migrants.

**Cultural Reflection:** Both the novel and movie address the socio-economic conditions that drives to the migration. The contrast between life In India and gulf, provoke discussion on the impact of globalization, economic disparity and cultural identity. It encourages audiences to consider their role in a global society and labor practices that exploit vulnerable populations. In the global times people migrate with dreams of the land but the reality they encountered are different. Both the novel and movie are a reflection on the social realities.

The cultural Symbolism employed in the novel and movie provides a framework through which audience and readers can reflect on their own experiences and beliefs. Story provides a truthful account on the nature of work, migration and human dignity emphasizing the greater understanding of the complexities involved in these issues.

## CONCLUSION

Both the novel and movie create an impact on their audience in a different way that explores the complexities of migrants through cultural symbolism, point of view, cinematography and its accessibility. Both mediums enhance the understanding of the audience on the condition of migrant workers in a foreign land. From the release of the movie, comparisons were made between the movie and the novel. Novel is about the exploration of a lonely man's life but movie serves as a survival thriller. It's easy to convey some feelings through words but difficult in the movie, where the director uses his creativity. Novel had many incidents to throw light on the protagonist's life but movie employs only a few incidents which the director uses his creativity to cater the taste of the audience. Actor also faced various challenges to adapt himself physically fit in to the character. In the movie audience can travel along with the protagonist's life which creates an immediate emotional impact.

Compared to the novel, goats are given lesser significance in the movie due to plot compression. Movie is not the exact replica of the novel, changes were made to cater the audience needs. Movie uses background music and songs to make the audience engage with the movie to avoid boring. The writer of the novel focuses on the protagonist's loyalty to his Arab master but movie focus on his survival and eventual escape. Both the mediums conveyed the same themes, it is not necessary to read the novel before watching the movie. Director adapted movie to the audience irrespective of whether they read the novel or not.

Aadujeevitham is not the single story of Najeeb, there are number of stories that remain unheard. People will be able to related with his conditions who had similar experiences, they identify themselves with him.

In global era, where migrations and exploitation still persist the novel and movie provide voice to the voiceless who remained at the fringes of the society. The use of cultural Symbolism invites readers to the understanding of migrant experiences.

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