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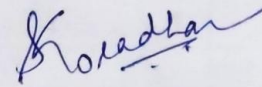
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## CONTENTS



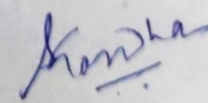
S. No.	Title & Author	Page No.
1	Transforming Student teachers into Reflective Thinkers: From Internship Logging to Blogging Dr. Giselle Ann D'souza	1-8
2	The Need to Train School Teachers in Basic Counselling Skills - A Case Study of Francis De Sales School, Aurangabad Fr. Stephen Almeida	9-13
3	Role of Teacher in Developing Equitable Society through Life Skills Ms. Joya Vrushal Chaudhari	14-19
4	Transforming Education for a Sustainable Tomorrow Dr. Cerena Aurin D'Cunha	20-23
5	Transforming Teacher Education through Interdisciplinary Courses Dr. Agnes Deosta	24-30
6	Transform the Education to Transform India Mr. Prakash Almeida	31-38
7	Emotional Disturbance: - The factor Leading to Burnout in Teachers Ms. Sarika C. Rawat	39-44
8	Study of Understanding, Reasoning and Regulation of Emotions among Adolescents Dr. Mabel Pimenta	45-53
9	The Role of Parents in Developing Learning Potential of Children at Home for Future Performance Ms. Amita Almeida	54-60
10	Technology in Medical Science Ms. Teresa Thomas Pereira	61-64
11	Understanding Self for Personal Transformation Dr. Sheetal S. Chaudhari	65-70



## CONTENTS

S. No.	Title & Author	Page No.
12	Dose Academic Buoyancy Affect Secondary School Students' Student Engagement? Ms. Reshma Rodrigues Prof. Dr. Sunita Magre	71-79
13	Using Films as Innovative Practice in Education for Transforming Ms. Sheetal Sanjay Koradkar	80-86
14	The Need to Educate and Counsel Parents on Learning Disabilities - the Role of Teachers for Creating Inclusive Classroom and Society Ms. Sonal Jagannath Naik	87-93
15	Raising Awareness among Youth about E-Waste - A Call to Transform the World Dr. Helen Jadhav	94-99
16	Entrepreneurship Education of Youth: Life Skills Approach Dr. Gauri P. Hardikar	100-106
17	Influence of Problem Solving Strategy on Students' Achievement in Mathematics Ms. Angelina Keith Nunes	107-116
18	Education for Transformation through Project Based Activities Dr. Sunita Magre	117-120
19	Political Socialization of Students: Formation through Religion, Transformation through Education Dr. Cindrella Sandeep D'Mello	121-125
20	Translanguaging: An Essential Pedagogic Practice for promoting Multilingualism in Indian Classrooms Dr. Sunil Rajpurkar	126-133
21	Use of Wiki as a Collaborative Tool to Develop Self-Service Digital Flex Book by Student Teachers Dr. Vaishali M. Sawade	134-143



  
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## CONTENTS



S. No.	Title & Author	Page No.
22	Self Transformation through Yoga Ms. Shrilaja Palur Prof. Jasmine Taneja Jha	144-149
23	Teaching of Marathi as a First Language Challenges and Problems Ms. Archana P. Alphanso	150-153
24	Innovative Practices in Education Ms. Nikita Rebello	154-158
25	Unschooling in the Indian Context Sr. Delicia S. Fernandes CCR.	159-164



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### 13. Using Films as Innovative Practice in Education for Transformation

Ms. Sheetal Sanjay Koradkar

Supervisor, Padmashree Bhausaheb Vartak College, Virar (E)

If you can't fly, then run  
If you can't run, then walk  
If you can't walk, then crawl  
But whatever you do,  
You have to keep moving forward

-Martin Luther King Jr

"FORWARD" a synonym for progressive, prospective and potential living stands synonymous to the 21<sup>st</sup> century which is termed as "century of knowledge". It is known for development and advancement of humankind as it marches forward making human life meaningful, constructive and collaborative. Exploring the nuances of human life man has progressed in creating a new social and economic order, bringing in the continuum of imagination, creativity and innovation.

For ages schools have been the precursors, the distributors of knowledge and isles of enlightenment. Making their impact felt in the societal scenarios as organizations meant to create and mould future world citizens. 21<sup>st</sup> century is the 'knowledge age' it demands for innovation in every aspect about which Peter Drucker quotes " since we live in the age of innovation , a practical education must prepare man for work that does not yet exist and cannot yet be defined". This innovation can be instilled in our kids only when our teaching learning centers are transformed from being merely centers of learning to being centers of creativity, collaboration communication and critical thinking.

This transformation has a key player that is a teacher, an educator whose transformation from mere giver of knowledge turns into a motivator, guide and facilitator of knowledge. This teacher needs to be armored with modern teaching methodology and powerful learning tools laced with technical knowhow at their disposal to transform their students into transformers who will change the society and its outlook with their knowledge and enlightenment.

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Schools have become technically sound in this age experiencing metamorphosis from transforming itself from dull boring four walled centers of testing knowledge into colorful, lively and technically advanced centers of imparting knowledge, making the learners tap the resources at their disposal to concretize their ideas to get themselves ready to meet the challenges of the modern world.

In this advancement of technological inputs to be used in the classroom apart from the modern devices of learning and learning tools films play a vital role in shaping the lives of the students learners motivating them and enhancing their interaction capacity within themselves, and the world around them. Films are our window to the world. Bringing into the lives of the viewers a vibrant representation of the world around them. They are the best form of communication, revealing the inner recesses of human behavior. Using them as educational tool for innovative learning not only enhances the teaching skills but also paves way for dynamic learning in the masses.

#### **Winds of Change**

The winds of transformation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are witnessed in areas and avenues unknown to the humankind earlier. This transformation need to be acknowledged globally as the world is shrinking into a global village. It is coming closer towards achieving noble and greater causes for the progress of mankind. The larger impact of this transformation can be seen when the world unanimously decides over a joint venture in making changes in the learning process essential in every walk of life. Today's education is sustainable education, no doubt it has been instrumental in supporting such learning which will educate at every level individual, social and global. A 21<sup>st</sup> century school is a place where creative productivity and community cohesion go hand in hand turning it into the most positive force to shape the 21<sup>st</sup> century society. Teachers here are passionate professionals who want the schools to turn into knowledge hubs to meet the ever changing needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century society. Though the world progresses in all fronts, we cannot deny that it is also hit with crisis of all forms natural and manmade. To meet this catastrophe, it is need of the hour to have schools equipped with gears to train and make their students face and confront the chaos, crisis, complexities that the world faces today.

Educational scenario needs a change where skilled and innovative teachers, effective leaders and vigilant citizens collaborate to give their learners an atmosphere to stir their



capacities and encourage them to take risk and challenges by using their imaginations to turn crisis into opportunities.

Students today are techno savvy. Their exposure to technology begins from their cradle hence its essential to create for them such classrooms which will cater to their needs and a teacher who is laced with modern technical knowhow along with the traditional aids and means of teaching. The emotional connect between a teacher and student is possible only when the teachers know what the pupils want and desire from them. So, here we have the 21<sup>st</sup> century teacher who is trained in formal way of teaching theories, concepts and lessons for which he is equipped with informal means of learning which includes media of all forms. This teacher brings to his pupils an entire cauldron of unique devices and medias to making his learning easy and understandable and make the retaining of the facts and information possible. Prensky(2001) has coined the term "digital natives" to refer to students who have grown up with technology and want it to become an integral part of their education whereas the teachers are termed as "digital immigrants" who need to be in sync with the changing attitudes of their students.

#### Films as effective transformational tool

Films are the replica of our society a strong detrimental force responsible for the transformation of the 21<sup>st</sup> century modern society. Being the part of our social fabric they bring to the masses the past, present and future story of the human race on a 16 mm film within a time span of couple of hours which remains fixed in our memory. It is this outside world teacher which facilitates effective teaching through emotional outpour influencing the attitude, behavior and critical thinking of the students and is instrumental in teaching the cultural and social aspects of the society to him.

Films are effective teaching tools using which a teacher can stimulate discussion and facilitate learning on a particular topic. It helps in (re)emphasizing the concepts presented through the use of textbook in classroom teaching. Films are the best source of aesthetic delight for the students who desire ways to explore their learning. Unknown facts are made known to the pupils through this small window which becomes an eye opener to numerous facets of human life. The 21<sup>st</sup> century which boast of bringing scientific and technical knowledge to the masses would have been parched from the want of emotional vent had it not being for the invention of cinema and in turn the films. The best source to learn humanities and social science is through the medium of films. Not only this the ways to tackle the crisis for everyday life at the



individual, social, national and international levels is possible by the use of films in the classroom. It's evident that the classrooms of humanities and social sciences become happening places of reflective thinking, empathy and understanding of human behavior and assimilation of creative ideas when films become an integral part of their curriculum. Textbooks create a picture on the page but what gets registered in the mind is the moving image on the screen.

Films no more stand for escapism but are rich source of fostering imagination in a classroom filled with witty brains, as they bring to the student's food for thought. They also act as a catalyst to bind the teacher student relationship and lead to a better interaction between them. They can be used by the teacher to enhance a strong relationship with their students and can help the teacher to earn trust and acceptance of his pupils making the teaching learning process a collaborative process where happiness and confidence prevails. They are a rich source to develop qualities like team work, leadership, values of life and high order thinking in the students. Moreover, showing films isn't a way to escape for the teacher but a way to put in more efforts and create an atmosphere conducive for learning for his students. He needs to know what will be the outcome of viewing a particular movie and which value will be learnt by the students. The teacher needs to do a lot of pre planning and post planning before bringing the films to the students and in turn motivate them into getting engaged into the process of self-learning. Films will bring into the students a very positive outlook towards their schooling experience and broaden their visualizing power, in turn they become the source of active learning as quoted by Robinson (2000) "moving away from straight lectures by showing a movie, especially when pairing it with methods of framing and debriefing, enables an educator to provide a form of active learning that can be very successful". When a teacher uses it as an effective tool in his teaching process he uses it to teach "between the lines" the ideals and values of life using it as a stimulator to initiate discussion and facilitate learning and makes monotonous lectures lively and student friendly.

### Bringing Bollywood into the classrooms

In the Indian context, Bollywood films are termed as "lifelines of the masses". This popular Hindi cinema has crossed the national boundaries becoming an international sensation. India as a nation can be best understood as a nation through the lens of Bollywood cinema. This cinema which was universally termed as escapist cinema is also a source of idealism and realism.



It has been instrumental in shaping the modern Indian society while upholding the contemporary values and blending it with the basic Indian culture.

Bringing Bollywood cinema into the classroom is making our students acquainted with the Indian culture, Indian tradition, Indian history and Indian society. Emotions and ethics too as rightly quoted by Rachel Dwyer (2006) "Many of the arts in the west no longer pay attention to the minds and souls, virtues, love, duty, self-sacrifice and character, but instead concentrate on bodies, from surface to orifices; Hindi films still ask important question about bodies, soul, morals and selves. (P.167). Generations of Indians have thrived on songs from Bollywood films and sometimes these songs bring out the essence of life. Never has the mornings of national festivals begun without the playing of songs like "jahan daal daal par sone ki chidiya karti hai basera" from Sikander-E-Azam and "khande-se milte hai khande, kadamo se kadam milte hai." from Lakshya, creating a national fervor in the hearts of the citizens. The epic dialogue from the film "Rang de Basanti" - "safaroshi ki tamana ab hamare dil me hai" brings to us the poetic delight of patriotism written by legendary freedom fighter Ashfaq Ullah Khan, which would have remained hidden under the quilt of obscurity had these films not revived it. Thus, we see how this nation and its popular cinema are interwoven. This cinema not only reflects the vast Indian society but also brings on the silver screen the story of human struggle and up gradation of life with a unique quality of Indianness in it. In the introductory chapter of Bollywood Nation: India Through Its Cinema Vamsee Juluri states "A few days after the tragic events in America on 11 September 2001, I wrote a short essay saying that, in an age when Hollywood (and Washington) seems to be all about 'saving the world' by destroying it, Indian cinema could be a great global cultural resource for imagining ways of living and relating that would be necessary to actually save the world".

Using Bollywood films in the transformed classrooms today is indeed a must. to the boring and routine life of the students. This multilingual classroom is brought on the same platform where these films unify the pupils and bring them closer to the society. Bollywood films though known for their larger than life depiction of life also bring in the realities of Indian life onscreen interwoven into melodramatic dialogues, which are thought provoking and not to forget the songs which create an impact on our souls. The actors hold their sway over the viewers and their characters and dialogues can become instrumental in making or breaking the notions of any society.



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The teachers of humanities and social sciences are often seen clinging to this popular medium of media to influence their students or bring home the values and ethics shown within these films. Using the film clips to bring in the thoughts of unity or any social cause and making students ponder over its effect on the society can be a wonderful activity. At the same time using songs for creating imagery and then translating it to the classroom language can be a fun filled event. Viewing any opening scenes of classic films from any popular adaptation before reading the book and later considering what it tells the viewer about genre, narrative and characters. Summarizing the film and turning it into a news report or using these films as stimulus for writing activities like reviews, travelogues, diary entries etc. can be a unique contribution in development of the aesthetic sense of the pupils and building in them the confidence by nurturing in them the creativity.

### Conclusion

Pedagogy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has adorned a new look. It has transformed itself from being the mere requirement of the society into the precursor of shaping the society and moulding it into modernity. In the study of humanities and social sciences communicative approach is in the forefront. In the modern classroom where smart boards and internet have made a niche for themselves the flow of ideas are available at the click of the finger tips. Using Bollywood films in such classrooms will enhance the creative aspects of the students and help them collaborate with one another in order to achieve a high order of learning. Bollywood films facilitate learning. They motivate the learners to get engaged in active learning process and get instilled in themselves such values and behavioral patterns which will help them to survive the chaotic world today which is awaiting a major transformation.

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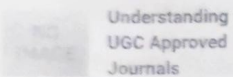
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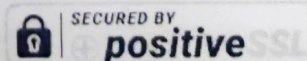
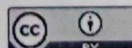
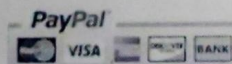
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# Observing the undercurrents of Multilingualism through the use of auteur theory: A case study of Aparna Sen's film *The Japanese wife*

Mrs Sheetal Sanjay Koradkar

Research Scholar, Department of English, University of Mumbai

## ABSTRACT

The world cinema today is known to be a melting pot that replicates cultures, nationalities, ethnicities and identities. Undoubtedly, it plays a major role in shaping the global understanding and thought and the need to appreciate the world cultures. With films crossing their national boundaries to reach out to the world audience it is evident to study its multicultural and multilingual nature. In a nation like India, where numerous languages and culture rule the film screens there is an ample scope to study the effects of multilingualism in the film making process. Indian cinema has always tried to maintain its authenticity by keeping up with its spirit of the nation's diversified culture and traditions by depicting it into its films. But, in the recent years, Indian cinema has reached out to the global audience for their universal acceptance through their realistic stories and convincing plots. This paper will try to present this multilingual status of the Indian cinema through the case study of the multilingual film *The Japanese Wife* directed by Aparna Sen. At the same time, there will be an attempt to look into all those aspects which make the film a multilingual auteurist recreation as an adapted version of the book written by Kunal Bose with the same name through the use of auteur theory.

**Keywords:** Multilingualism, Indian cinema, auteur theory.

## INTRODUCTION

The global cinema is venturing into a new era where there is a demand to welcome all the unexplored areas of human understanding which need urgent notice. In order to reach out to the audience across the world with its new ideas, thoughts and technical innovation cinema today requires being accessible to all. In this process its multilingual approach acts as a cultural force and makes cinema a potent ground that generates wonderful multilingual experience which the audience can relate to. Indian cinema is a part of global cinema that has become the part of the multilingual cinematic journey as the regional films in India have started to gain momentum with their huge fan following crossing the national as well as the international boundaries. Amongst the numerous regional cinemas that rein the cinematic space the new wave Bengali cinema is instrumental in showcasing the Bengali culture keeping the spirit of "Bengaliness"<sup>1</sup> alive through the realistic depiction of the historical and socio-political conditions prevalent in the society. Filmmakers from "Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Gatak, Mrinal Sen, Tapan Sinha, Aparna Sen"<sup>2</sup> and others have set a standard to Bengali cinema. Cinematic works of these filmmakers have gained success nationally as well as internationally for imagining and creating cinema pertaining to the aspects that have universal appeal. Aparna Sen is known to be such an auteur filmmaker whose films have been nationally as well as internationally recognized for their subtle take of social issues of urgent notice. This paper looks into the multilingual aspect that the filmmaker Aparna Sen undertakes in order to exhibit her auteurist touch to her multilingual film *The Japanese wife*.

### The Multilingual Indian Cinema

The word Multilingual is defined by *The Oxford Learner's Dictionaries* as an act of "speaking or using several languages"<sup>3</sup> from this word arises the word Multilingualism, which is "an ability to use three or more languages"<sup>4</sup> according to the *The Oxford Companion to the English Language*. Thus, in Film studies the multilingual films are "movies or documentaries that are shot in more than one language."<sup>5</sup> Simber Atay in her article "Multilingualism and Cinema" feels that "Multilingualism inspires cinema. In fact multilingualism exists in the nature of cinema. Global film industry is a multicultural and polygot organization"<sup>6</sup> In a diverse nation like India one can get to live as well as experience multilingualism throughout the expanse of the national boundaries where languages in all forms, ancient, modern, lost, extinct, rare and invented find their space in the national fabric. The expanse of these linguistic boundaries has supported





multilingualism to become the part of the cinematic space in India, where popular cinema bollywood along with the regional cinema make multilingual films for their global audience. Naveen Chandra in his article "The Rise of Regional- A Multilingual decade" senses the accelerated growth of multilingual cinema in India as well as globally when he explains:

The holy grail of films has always been the search for the universal story that appeals to a much larger universe than the one it is set in. When Disney makes a film based on a Lion set in the jungles of Africa, the raw essence of the tale, the story telling craft, and the emotional involvement of the audience as it connects with the characters laughter or tears irrespective of whether he's watching the movie in the Philippines, in Sudan, In Kiev or in Bhopal; makes it a story with a universal appeal."<sup>7</sup>

Thus, we see that whether a film belong to the popular cinema, regional cinema or international cinema its ability to tell diverse stories that appeal to the world audience beyond their understanding of the language in form of its multilingual approach makes these films stand out as exemplary pointers of cinematic creative that is shared worldwide by the film makers, lovers, critics, scholars and researchers of cinema.

Thanks to the growing network of OTT platforms like Netflix, Amazon, Disney Hotstar, Zee 5 the multilingual films and their remakes have become popular sources of entertainment know for their good stories that are highly diversified, realistic rendering of sensitive issues and portrayal of very true and everyday characters that find their space within the inner conscience of the audience. These multilingual films help in bonding the audiences with a common connect of audiovisual creativity that bring out the deeper understanding of human mind and thought which is universal. Shashi Deshpande and Meta Mazaj in their book *World Cinema: A Critical Introduction* explains the filmmakers reasons to opt for a multilingual model where they highlight that "the reason to opt for a model of multiple- language instead of regional cinema is the remarkable permeability of films and directors from one realm to another. As films are dubbed, remade, then brought back to the region, they become part of the larger fabric of cinema in India".<sup>8</sup>

#### **The Japanese Wife as a multilingual film through the lenses of auteur theory**

The film *The Japanese Wife* is an adapted version of a short story written by writer Kunal Basu with the same name. The film is known for its Multilingual approach for the filmmaker Aparna Sen uses three different languages to make this film that is English, Bengali and Japanese at the same time the film is dubbed in Hindi to reach out specifically to the Hindi speaking audience within the country. The film is a wonderful display of tenderly and lyrically told surreal story that comes as a fresh display of romantically crafted love story from the book onto the screen about which Aparna Sen herself asserts, "It is a very, very unusual story."<sup>9</sup> She gives her auteur touch to the film when she recreates the film adding elements of melancholy, humour, repressed human emotions and the idea of pure love. An auteur is "a film director whose personal influence and artistic control over his or her films are so great that he or she may be regarded as their author"<sup>10</sup> Film as a collaborative entity relies on the filmmaker who controls the entire process of filmmaking in turn become an auteur and tells the story with his or her personal touch to it. Undoubtedly, Aparna Sen is an auteur, who commands the entire filmmaking process with the help of her creative and technical team she works to give life to her films. In this film too, we find her intelligent approach in bringing out the varied dimensions of human life through her characters and the background of cinematic settings to underline their actions.

The film *The Japanese Wife* is an epistolary film as the audience get to know the story of the characters Snehamoy and Miyage through their letters. The story is about genuine and true love between them. Snehamoy, a Bengali school teacher and Miyage, a Japanese shop owner correspond within each other as pen-pals in the early days of their life. This communication further embarks on the journey from being pen-friends to confidants of each other sharing their joys, inhibitions, anxieties and worry and culminate in "pen-marriage"<sup>11</sup> bounded to each other though physical and cultural difference have set them apart they take their marital vows seriously and continue to do so for fifteen long years. This relation comes to test when Sandhya, a widow and her son Poltu come to stay with Snehamoy and his aunt. Snehamoy's world which revolves around writing and receiving letters is affected with the arrival of Poltu, in whose company he realizes his role as a responsible caretaker and also enjoys the joys of fatherly duties at the same time there is an inexplicable bond of understanding created between him and Sandhya. A letter from Miyage about her ill health disturbs Snehamoy and tries to reach out to her through her letters and parcels of medicines from various medics. On the suggestion of his doctor friend on a stormy day he visits an oncologist in Kolkata, only to himself get ill with pneumonia due to which he dies. The news of his death is sent to Miyage who comes in person to meet the bereaved family of her deceased husband, where she is welcomed by Sandhya.

The film comes as a multilingual approach undertaken by Aparna sen about which Anusuya Chakrabarti in her article "Ideas, Thoughts and Letters in 'The Japanese Wife'" asserts:





“The difference in language and culture are intensified and enriched as the medium when Sen intentionally capitalizes on the multilingual aspect of the narrative where instead of depending on the writer’s narrational English she uses the multilingual approach using raw Bangla that is characteristic of the Sunderbans... along with the use of Japanese for scenes shot at Japan and English used for the conversation within the letters and the subtitles”<sup>12</sup>

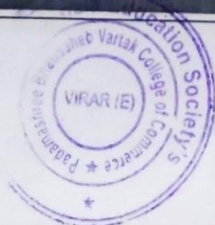
As a true auteur Sen brings out her style to recreate Kunal Basu’s story on screen keeping its multilingual and multicultural aspect intact. Following observations prove her stand to make it a multilingual film

1. Through the film the audience are given glimpses of both the Bengali as well as the Japanese culture through the apt use of the Bangla, Japanese and English Language in order to target the audience of all the three languages.
2. The societal conditions are also highlighted on screen while the protagonists narrate their letters like Shenamoy worried about how Miyage will adjust to the lavatory at his home and further in one scene where he explains the rituals that a Bengali widow has to follow when he describes Sandhya’s stay at his home.
3. Miyage is shown to tie a ritual thread for Snehamoy’s quick recovery during his ill health. Miyage dressing up as a Bengali bride and smelling the champ flowers sent by Shenamoy on their anniversary. Snehamoy is also shown visiting various medics to get cure to Miyage’s ailment.
4. The filmmaker shows distinct cultural differences with the help of her cinematographer Anay Goswami recreates settings that match the original version. The camera captures the cultural and linguistic hues along with the scenic beauties of both the quiet village at the banks of the Matla river and the Japanese river Nakanokuchi along with the cities of Yokohama, Tsukuba and Ibaraki<sup>13</sup>
5. The filmmaker tries to show how the linguistic limitations can lead to misinterpretations like Miyage meaning the gift and Snehamoy meaning the affectionate one has to be explained by both the characters. When Miyage shows her inefficiency to pronounce his name correctly, he actually writes to her the proper way to pronounce the word ‘sneh’. His aunt can’t pronounce Miyage’s name and interprets it as ‘maagi’ meaning a woman in Bengali.
6. What brings out within this multilingual aspect is Aparna’s recreation of her hero, played by Rahul Bose, who himself being an astute linguist in terms of usage of English language had to be trained to use the colloquial Bengali and the Bengali accented English throughout the film.
7. Casting in a Japanese female lead Chigusa Takaku to play the role of Miyage is an apt decision by Aparna to recreate a realist feel to the story in order to bring out to the audience the display of Japanese culture and language through the character of Miyage.
8. Through her multilingual take she tries to tackle the complex issues of human life that are common in all the societies. Issues like patriarchal dominance, communalism, repressed sexuality and societal constraints that overpower an individual’s existence.

Thus, it is clear that the filmmaker makes the use of multilingualism as a tool to recreate the most pure form of love story that follows all the norms that a multilingual film attempts to follow. The film represents the required multilingual environment for all its audience. The basic feature of the film is that throughout the film three languages are used. The film shows the stark linguistic differences between the characters. The plot is developed through the articulation of these different languages. The film is given complete support through music, sound and cinematography to provide audio-visual equivalents to present cultural specificities. All these features make the film become a convenient document to discuss the human conditions prevalent amongst the multiple cultures of the world and how the common strand of aesthetic creative by the film maker binds them together.

#### CONCLUSION

The multilingual cinema and its rise in the present scenario are essentially required to enhance the audience perception on their comprehensive take of intercultural aspects in life. Such films bring out the linguistic diversities that are detrimental for the strong foundation of the globalized world. Whenever an auteur evidently undertakes such project to bring out the various facets of linguistic diversities in form of stories, situations, incidents and characters there is an attempt to give an impetus to the diverse communicative aspects that arise into the mind of the filmmaker. As an auteur such filmmakers give back to the society the varied ways to interpret the stories for their audience which they bring on to screen through their



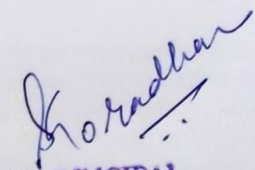


aesthetic , linguistic and cinematic creativity . Aparna Sen too tries to attempt this feat as true auteur in the film *The Japanese Wife*.<sup>14</sup>

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