

Indian Journal of Modern Research and Reviews

This Journal is a member of the 'Committee on Publication Ethics'

Online ISSN:2584-184X



Research Article

Integration of Film and Fiction: A Transformative Approach towards Cultural and Literary Education

Manpreet Singh

Assistant Professor, Department of English, Seth Bihari Lal Chhabra Govt. College Anoopgarh, Sri Ganganagar, Rajasthan, India

Corresponding Author: *Manpreet Singh

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19607364>

Abstract

In recent years, literary and cultural education in India has been compelled to respond to rapid social change, curricular reform, and the renewed emphasis on holistic learning. This has been particularly articulated in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Within everyday classroom practice, traditional discipline-bound approaches often prove inadequate for engaging students with questions of identity, ethics, history, and social inequality. This paper emerges from such pedagogical contexts and argues for a transformative approach to literary and cultural education through the sustained use of fiction and film.

Drawing on constructivist, transformative, and experiential learning theories, the study treats fiction and cinema not as supplementary teaching aids but as central cultural texts that actively shape students' interpretive and ethical frameworks. Indian literary works and films which are rooted in regional realities, historical experience, and social conflict, enable learners to critically engage with issues of caste, gender, nationalism, development, memory, and belonging. Classroom engagement with these narratives encourages reflection, dialogue, and the questioning of inherited assumptions.

By foregrounding Indian fiction and cinema within literary and cultural pedagogy, the paper demonstrates how narrative-based teaching can move beyond rote textual analysis towards a more reflective, inclusive, and socially responsive educational practice. It ultimately positions this approach as a meaningful response to the challenges and possibilities of contemporary Indian higher education.

Manuscript Information

- ISSN No: 2584-184X
- Received: 30-01-2026
- Accepted: 06-04-2026
- Published: 16-04-2026
- MRR:4(SP1); 2026: 47-51
- ©2026, All Rights Reserved
- Plagiarism Checked: Yes
- Peer Review Process: Yes

How to Cite this Article

Singh M. Integration of Film and Fiction: A Transformative Approach towards Cultural and Literary Education. Indian J Mod Res Rev. 2026;4(SP1):47-51.

Access this Article Online



www.mrrjournal.in

KEYWORDS: Transformative pedagogy, literary education, cultural studies, Indian cinema, Indian fiction, NEP 2020.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Theoretical Framework: Foundations for a Transformative Literary and Cultural Pedagogy

The theoretical framework informing this study is shaped not only by established educational theory but also by classroom experience within Indian higher education, where literature and culture are often taught under rigid curricular constraints. A transformative approach to literary and cultural pedagogy requires moving away from purely text-centred instruction towards modes of learning that recognise students as active interpreters of culture. Constructivist, transformative, and experiential learning theories together provide a useful lens for understanding how fiction and film can support this shift.

1.2 Constructivist Learning Theory and Cultural Meaning-Making

Constructivist learning theory emphasises that learners construct knowledge through interaction with texts, contexts, and social realities. In literary and cultural studies classrooms, this perspective challenges the dominance of fixed interpretations and encourages dialogic engagement. Students reading Indian texts such as Premchand's *Godaan* or Mahasweta Devi's short fiction often bring their own social observations into discussion, linking narrative representation with lived realities of agrarian distress, caste hierarchy, and marginalisation. Such classroom interactions demonstrate how literary texts function as cultural documents rather than isolated aesthetic artefacts.

This constructivist orientation naturally supports interdisciplinary engagement, allowing students to draw upon history, sociology, and economics while analysing literature. Meaning, in this sense, is not delivered but negotiated, making literary study both intellectually rigorous and socially grounded.

1.3 Transformative Learning Theory and Critical Cultural Awareness

Transformative learning theory foregrounds critical reflection that leads to shifts in perspective. In literary and cultural education, transformation often occurs when students encounter narratives that unsettle familiar assumptions. Indian fiction and cinema frequently perform this function by confronting readers and viewers with ethical ambiguity and social contradiction.

Texts by writers such as Saadat Hasan Manto or films like *Article 15* provoke discomfort and debate in the classroom, compelling students to reconsider ideas of nationalism, justice, and morality. Through guided discussion and reflective writing, learners begin to recognise how cultural narratives shape belief systems. In this way, literary education becomes a space for cultivating critical cultural awareness rather than passive appreciation.

1.4 Experiential Learning and Narrative Engagement

Experiential learning theory highlights the importance of experience, reflection, and application. Fiction and film provide mediated yet powerful experiences that allow students to

engage with social worlds beyond their immediate environment. Films such as *Taare Zameen Par* or *Court* often resonate strongly with students because they render abstract institutional processes education systems or judicial mechanisms—visible and emotionally tangible.

When such viewing experiences are followed by structured reflection and analytical tasks, students translate affective response into critical insight. This process strengthens interpretation and deepens interdisciplinary understanding.

1.5 NEP 2020 and the Indian Educational Context

The National Education Policy 2020 offers a policy framework that supports this pedagogical reorientation. Its emphasis on multidisciplinary learning, flexibility, and critical thinking legitimises the use of narrative forms within higher education. Within this context, the role of the teacher shifts from transmitter of knowledge to facilitator of dialogue and inquiry. Grounded in Indian cultural contexts and informed by educational theory, this framework positions literary and cultural education as a transformative practice one that equips students to engage thoughtfully with the complexities of contemporary Indian society.

2. NEP 2020 and the Indian Pedagogical Shift

The National Education Policy 2020 marks a decisive move towards multidisciplinary and holistic education in India. It emphasises flexibility in curricula, integration of arts and humanities with sciences, and the cultivation of critical and creative thinking. The policy's focus on "how to think" rather than "what to think" provides an enabling framework for narrative-based pedagogy.

By incorporating fiction and film into teaching, educators can operationalise NEP 2020's vision. Indian epics, regional literature, and cinema can be used to integrate language learning with ethics, history, and philosophy. For example, retellings of the *Mahabharata* such as Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel* offer opportunities to explore mythology, politics, satire, and postcolonial critique within a single pedagogical framework.

3. Interdisciplinary vs. Multidisciplinary Pedagogy: Conceptual Clarification

Although often used interchangeably, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches differ significantly in intent and outcome.

A multidisciplinary approach places multiple disciplines side by side. For instance, a film like *Lagaan* (2001) ^[13] may be studied by historians for its colonial backdrop, by economists for its depiction of taxation, and by literature students for narrative structure each discipline operating independently.

An interdisciplinary approach, by contrast, integrates these perspectives to generate a cohesive understanding. In an interdisciplinary classroom, *Lagaan* becomes a site where colonial history, subaltern resistance, nationalism, sports sociology, and narrative aesthetics intersect. Students are

encouraged to synthesise these perspectives rather than treat them as discrete analyses.

This distinction has significant pedagogical implications:

- Multidisciplinary learning promotes breadth of exposure.
- Interdisciplinary learning fosters depth, synthesis, and critical insight.

Indian educational traditions, such as the Gurukul system, historically embraced holistic learning, where philosophy, ethics, arts, and sciences were interconnected. Contemporary interdisciplinary pedagogy can thus be seen as a return to indigenous epistemological practices, reimaged for modern classrooms.

4. Pedagogical Applications of Fiction and Film in India

Fiction and film function not merely as illustrative aids but as central pedagogical texts that actively shape meaning-making, critical inquiry, and interdisciplinary engagement. In the Indian context, literature and cinema are deeply intertwined with social realities and collective memory, offering rich narrative resources that address regional, linguistic, cultural, and ideological plurality. When introduced into the classroom with guided discussion and critical frameworks, these narrative forms enable students to connect academic concepts with lived experience.

Indian fiction, in particular, provides fertile ground for interdisciplinary exploration. Novels such as Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* allow learners to engage simultaneously with questions of gender, caste hierarchy, postcolonial history, political violence, and narrative experimentation. The text can be examined through literary analysis, while also inviting sociological discussions on caste oppression, psychological readings of trauma and memory, and historical inquiry into Kerala's socio-political milieu. Similarly, works like Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance* open up interdisciplinary conversations on Emergency-era politics, urban poverty, ethics, and human resilience, making them valuable texts for literature, political science, and sociology classrooms alike.

Short fiction further enhances pedagogical flexibility. The stories of Saadat Hasan Manto, for instance, serve as powerful entry points into discussions on Partition, collective trauma, moral ambiguity, and the psychology of violence. Stories such as *Toba Tek Singh* enable students to critically examine nationalism, borders, and madness, integrating perspectives from history, psychology, and philosophy. Premchand's short stories, including *Sadgati* and *Kafan*, are equally significant, as they foreground caste exploitation, economic injustice, and rural realities, allowing for interdisciplinary engagement with social ethics, economics, and cultural studies.

Indian cinema, owing to its visual immediacy and emotional resonance, is particularly effective in experiential and interdisciplinary learning. Films like *Taare Zameen Par* (2007) [22] are frequently used in education, psychology, and teacher-training programmes to discuss learning differences, inclusive

education, child psychology, and alternative pedagogical practices. The film encourages students to question standardised notions of intelligence while integrating insights from educational theory, developmental psychology, and ethics of care.

Similarly, Swades (2004) [21] lends itself to multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary modules by weaving together themes of development, technology, ethics, nationalism, and diaspora identity. Students can analyse the film through the lenses of development studies, political science, science and technology studies, and cultural anthropology. Other contemporary films such as *Article 15* (2019) and *Jai Bhim* (2021) [9] further extend pedagogical possibilities by enabling discussions on constitutional values, caste discrimination, legal frameworks, and human rights, integrating law, sociology, ethics, and media studies.

Regional cinema also plays a crucial role in expanding pedagogical scope. Marathi films like *Court* (2014) [4] and Malayalam films such as *Kumbalangi Nights* (2019) [12] allow students to engage with legal processes, masculinity, mental health, and social change within specific cultural contexts. Such films help decentralise dominant narratives and sensitise learners to India's internal diversity, reinforcing the interdisciplinary aim of contextual and inclusive education.

Through these varied literary and cinematic texts, fiction and film emerge as dynamic pedagogical tools that facilitate critical thinking, empathy, and synthesis across disciplines. Their strategic integration into curricula transforms classrooms into spaces of dialogue, reflection, and socially responsive learning, aligning closely with the objectives of contemporary Indian higher education and NEP 2020.

5. Challenges and Opportunities in the Indian Context

Despite their considerable pedagogical potential, the integration of fiction and film into classroom practice is accompanied by several structural and methodological challenges, particularly within the Indian higher education system. One of the most significant constraints is curricular rigidity. Examination-oriented and content-heavy syllabi often leave little room for pedagogical experimentation, compelling teachers to prioritise coverage over critical engagement. As a result, narrative-based methods such as film screenings or extended literary discussions are frequently perceived as supplementary rather than integral to academic learning.

Another major challenge lies in infrastructural limitations. Many institutions, especially in rural and semi-urban areas, lack adequate access to audiovisual equipment, screening facilities, or reliable digital connectivity. This uneven technological access restricts the consistent use of films and other multimedia resources, thereby widening the gap between policy aspirations and classroom realities. Additionally, there exists the risk of passive consumption, wherein films are viewed merely as entertainment. In the absence of structured discussion, critical frameworks, or reflective assignments, students may consume cinematic texts uncritically, undermining their academic value.

However, these challenges are counterbalanced by substantial pedagogical opportunities. Fiction and film enable multisensory and inclusive learning, appealing to visual, auditory, and affective learners alike. This is particularly valuable in diverse classrooms where students possess varying linguistic abilities and learning preferences. Narrative forms thus promote accessibility and enhance comprehension beyond traditional text-centric pedagogy.

Moreover, fiction and film play a crucial role in cultivating empathy and ethical reasoning. By situating abstract concepts within human stories, they encourage learners to engage emotionally and morally with issues such as social injustice, marginalisation, and ethical responsibility. Such engagement is essential for nurturing socially conscious and reflective citizens, a key objective of contemporary education reforms.

Finally, narrative-based pedagogy opens avenues for collaborative and interdisciplinary teaching. Film-based modules often necessitate cooperation across departments such as literature, sociology, psychology, and media studies thereby fostering academic dialogue and curricular integration. With appropriate teacher training, institutional encouragement, and infrastructural investment, these opportunities can be effectively harnessed, enabling fiction and film to function as transformative tools within Indian higher education.

6. CONCLUSION

The integration of fiction and film into multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary pedagogy holds immense promise for Indian higher education. Anchored in constructivist, transformative, and experiential learning theories, and aligned with the vision of NEP 2020, narrative-based teaching enables learners to connect knowledge with lived reality.

Indian fiction and cinema, rich in social, cultural, and historical complexity, are particularly well suited for such integrative approaches. When used thoughtfully, they move education beyond rote learning towards critical inquiry, empathy, and reflective citizenship. In an increasingly complex and plural society, embracing fiction and film as central pedagogical tools can help nurture adaptable, ethical, and socially conscious learners prepared for the challenges of the 21st century.

REFERENCES

- Roy A. *The God of Small Things*. New Delhi: IndiaInk; 1997.
- Bashir L, Wani G. Multidisciplinary and holistic education: achieving academic excellence and bolstering all-round development in the 21st century with NEP 2020. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*. 2024;12(1). Available from: <https://ijip.in/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/18.01.017.20241201.pdf>
- Cardoso LM, Mendes T. Education, pedagogy and literacies: challenges and horizons of film literacy. ERIC. 2022. Available from: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1349442.pdf>
- Court [film]. India: Zoo Entertainment; 2014.
- Dead Poets Society [film]. United States: Touchstone Pictures; 1989.
- Dewey J. *Experience and education*. New York: Macmillan; 1938.
- Factual America. Exploring the boundaries of film as an educational tool. 2024. Available from: <https://www.factualamerica.com/filmmaking/exploring-the-boundaries-of-film-as-an-educational-tool>
- Harper E. 15 mind-bending films that blur reality and fiction. *Woke Waves*. 2024. Available from: <https://www.wokewaves.com/posts/films-blurring-reality-fiction-top>
- Jai Bhim [film]. India: 2D Entertainment; 2021.
- Jarvis C. The educational power of fiction—an interdisciplinary exploration. In: Jarvis C, Hall DG, editors. *The arts and the teaching of the arts*. Cham: Springer; 2019. p.1–18. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-17693-8_1
- Kolb DA. *Experiential learning: experience as the source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall; 1984.
- Kumbalangi Nights [film]. India: Fahadh Faasil and Friends; 2019.
- Lagaan: once upon a time in India [film]. India: Aamir Khan Productions; 2001.
- Malik P, Behera S. The transformative power of experiential learning: bridging theory and practice. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*. 2024;12(2). Available from: <https://ijip.in/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/18.01.007.20241202.pdf>
- Manto SH. *Toba Tek Singh*. In: Manto ke afsane. Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications; 1955.
- Nguyen NN. The balancing act of repurposing feature films and TV series for university teaching. *Encyclopedia*. 2024;4(1):497–511. Available from: <https://www.mdpi.com/2673-8392/4/1/33>
- Premchand. *Godaan*. New Delhi: Lokbharti Prakashan; 1936.
- Rajpopat V. Use of film as a teaching resource: a literature review. *International Journal of Education and Knowledge Studies*. 2023. Available from: <https://ijeks.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/IJEKS2-9-004.pdf>
- Selma [film]. United Kingdom/United States: Pathé; Plan B Entertainment; 2014.
- Slot EM. Multi-, inter-, and transdisciplinarity: what is what? Utrecht University. 2024. Available from: <https://www.uu.nl/en/education/educational-development-training/knowledge-dossiers/interdisciplinary-education-and-cel/multi-inter-and-transdisciplinarity-what-is-what>
- Swades: we, the people [film]. India: Ashutosh Gowariker Productions; 2004.
- Taare Zameen Par [film]. India: Aamir Khan Productions; 2007.
- The Truman Show [film]. United States: Paramount Pictures; 1998.

24. This vs. That. Interdisciplinary vs. multidisciplinary – what’s the difference? 2024. Available from: <https://thisvs-that.io/interdisciplinary-vs-multidisciplinary>
25. 12 Angry Men [film]. United States: Orion-Nova Productions; 1957.
26. Verma K. Interdisciplinary education and the evolving role of teachers: a theoretical exploration of NEP 2020’s vision. Pedagogy of Learning. 2024. Available from: <https://pedagogyoflearning.com/wp-content/uploads/2-Kumud-Verma-Interdisciplinary-Education-and-the-Evolving-Role-of-Teachers.pdf>

Creative Commons License

This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution–Non-commercial–No Derivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) License. This license permits users to copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format for non-commercial purposes only, provided that appropriate credit is given to the original author(s) and the source. No modifications, adaptations, or derivative works are permitted.

Disclaimer: The views, opinions, statements, and conclusions expressed in the papers, abstracts, presentations, and other scholarly contributions included in this conference are solely those of the respective authors. The organisers and publisher shall not be held responsible for any loss, harm, damage, or consequences — direct or indirect — arising from the use, application, or interpretation of any information, data, or findings published or presented in this conference. All responsibility for the originality, authenticity, ethical compliance, and correctness of the content lies entirely with the respective authors.