newspaper and magazines. Some film reviewers even go to the extent of rating a film in terms of stars on a seven star scale. We shall try to see what criteria these reviewers take into account in pronouncing a work as good or bad and in rating a work.

It may interest you to know that some reviewers even go to the extent of proscribing a book for various reasons. The film Censor Board is in a way a board of reviewers passing judgment on films and so on. You all know that the recent blockbuster Jodha Akbar was banned by reviewers from being screened in Rajasthan because the reviewers felt that the film was distorting history.

Likewise, reviewers take the extreme step of banning books on the following grounds:

1. Obscenity
2. Hurting religious feelings
3. Questioning the sovereignty of State
4. Adverse reporting on the country
5. For such writings as may cause strained relation with other countries.

A complete list of books banned under different grounds is hard to compile. However, the following list should provide a backdrop for our present study. These are the books banned in India since independence.

1. Obscenity

Kinsley et al: *Sexual behavior in the human male* (1953)
Kinsley et al: *Sexual behavior in the human female* (1953)
Lawrence, D.H.: *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1958)

2. Hurting religions feelings

Menon, Aubrey: *The Ramayana* (1957)
Ram Swarup: *Understanding Islam through Hadi* (1983)
Rushdie, Salman: *The Satanic Verses* (1989)

From this statement it can be convincingly deduced that it is possible to develop a common method or technique or approach to review narrative texts irrespective of genres.

When you take up a narrative text, a novel for example, for writing a review on the book, you will discover as you read along that the "story" in the book is in most cases an account of what happened to particular people – and of what it was like for them to experience what happened – in particular circumstances and with specific consequences. You can, for example, state what a book is about or is not about. Read the following extract of a review of Salman Rushdie's novel *Shame* by Malcolm Bradbury published in the **Guardian**:

"Shame is and is not about Pakistan, that invented, imaginary country," 'a failure of the dreaming mind'….. The theme is shame and shamelessness, born from the violence which is modern history….."

The above extract is significant for our purpose. When we sit down to write a review on a book, we can find a lead – a starting point, if you like – to approach the book with the question: What is the book about? It is a "global understanding" of the subject matter of the book. You present this account at the beginning before you move on to what happens to the people or the event in the subsequent development of the story.

However, a review is not a summary or gist of the book under review. The reviewer has to evaluate the content, the style of presentation of the content, the layout of the content and a host of other aspects in order to pass a judgment on the work. Let us look at another excerpt of a review of Salman Rushdie's novel *Shame* to explore this point further:

"There can seldom have been so robust and baroque an incarnation of the political novel as Shame. It can be read as fable, polemic or excoriation; a history or as fiction ……..this is the novel as myth and as satire." (Sunday Telegraph)

When the reviewer evaluates the novel as 'fable', as a 'polemic', as an

gesture on the part of the author to have thought to dedicate the book to the memory of the Singphow chief Bessa Gaum, the martyr Maniram Dutta Barua, the explorer Robert Bruce and the unsung workers and entrepreneurs who had braved calamities and exploitation to set up a tea industry of world repute. Indeed, each of the seven chapters and the chronology of events that make up the eighth, from a rich brew having the right proportion of strength, colour and flavour that can be a connoisseur's delight.

The first chapter "Discovering Tea" introduces Mr. Andrew Gillis Bewles, an old Englishman who was on a nostalgic trip to a tea – estate in Tezpur, his birthplace, where his father happened to be the Superintending Manager years ago. However, the presence of Mr. Bowles in the structure of the text of the book is only incidental as evident from the way the main theme of the chapter - - the colourful history of tea – is introduced. Quoting authoritative sources like Cambridge Encyclopedia of China (1982) as well as the myths and legends surrounding its history, the chapter brings out the value of tea in uniting people from all walks of life by their fondness of this remarkable drink.

The second chapter "Tea is forever" traces the Chinese origin of tea way back in the seventh century and moves on to an exploration of its Indian origin. In doing so, the chapter gives due credit to Maniram Dewan not only for the discovery of the tea plant but also for introducing the British trader and explorer Robert Bruce to the Singphow chief Bessa Gaum and helping in making a deal with the latter to supply indigenous tea plants. The chapter records that for this role, Maniram was appointed Dewan in the Assam Tea Company prior to starting his own tea plantations, thereby, becoming the first Indian tea planter.

Chapter three dwells upon the flavour and taste of tea, its classification, process of manufacture of teas like black tea, green tea, oorlong tea, organic tea, decaffeinated tea, flavored tea, massala tea and so on. It also dwells upon the establishment of the Assam Tea Company at Nazira in Sibsagar district and the changing roles of the labourers in the development of the industry as equal partners in progress.

2. The remaining paragraphs except the last paragraph focus on the narrative technique of the book highlighting the contents in each chapter.

3. The concluding chapter gives an overall impression on the book.

A complete review of a novel is now taken up in the section called "Check your Progress – 1" so as to make the reading a but activity orientated.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1



Read the following book review:

Khaled Hosseini: *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Bloomsbury, Price £5.99, Pages 372

Hosseini's first novel, the splendidly sentimental The Kite Runner was quite the rage and deservedly so; this one, the story of two wives, is guaranteed to go the bestseller route as well. It's dramatic, even soap operatic, providing an insider's view of the plight of the girl child, and of the Afghan wife.

The book begins with the story of Mariam, confined with her epileptic mother, to a tiny hut on the outskirts of Herat. For Mariam is harami, an illegitimate child of a rich businessman. When her mother hangs herself, Mariam is married at 15 to a 45 year old shoemaker Rasheed of "crowded teeth …. nails yellow – brown, like the inside of a rotting apple" , and dispatched to far– away Kabul, where wives are only valued for their procreating potential. And Miriam only miscarries.

Here's when the pretty Laila, who lives down the street in Kabul, comes in. The rocket – bomb death of her parents pushes her, pregnant and protector– less, into the wife– beating arms of Rasheed. The two women soon warm up to each other, their courtyard cups of chai and halwa together becoming one bright spot in the day.

4.4 TECHNIQUES OF FILM REVIEW

In his book *Films as Film* (Pelican, 1972), V. F. Perkins observes that in the early years of films even prominent film – makers like William De Mille didn't expect films to develop into anything which could be called art. Even as late as 1947, film reviewers regarded films as bits of celluloid and wire and it could not be considered art. However, today no one will deny that film constitutes a new kind of art that goes by the term "recording art".

This changed attitude towards films has been due to the fact that film developed by a process of replication of the novel, painting, drama and music. Anything that happens in life that is seen or heard can be recorded on film, tape or disc. Because of this advantage, film has not only achieved immense popularity but also posed a challenge to other arts. In fact, the novel and the stage drama had to redefine themselves in terms of the new artistic language of films.

You will note that there is a film version of a good number of novels. Dr. Bhabendranath Saikia's *Antarip* has a film version tilled *Agnisnan*. Atulananda Goswami's *Namghoria* has a tele film version serialized in the television. The major works of Defoe, Swift, Stevenson, Dickens and a host of other novelists have film versions. The narrative potential of film is so marked that it has developed a close bond with the novel. Both films and novels tell long stories with a wealth of details and they do it from the point of view of a narrator. Whatever can be told in print in a novel can be roughly pictured or told in film. One can see a high degree of correlation between pictorial narrations as in film with language narration as in a novel.

In writing a review for a film the steps that we follow in writing review for books are not so stinking by different. Here is a film review published in ***India Today***.

Mera Pehla Pehla Pyaar: starring – Hazel ,Ruslaan Mumtaz. Directed by Robby Grewal

Check your Progress – 1 and you will find how comfortably these steps fit to the review of a film.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

Select a feature film in any language and write a review of that film. Follow the steps given below for your review work.

(a) Write the names of the film, the cast and the director

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(b) Begin by stating what the film is about in general terms introducing the prominent actors in their roles.

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(c) From general terms you move on to specifics to highlight some notable scene or episode of the film.

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(d) Conclude your review writing with a general impression on the story, the east on the film.

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4.5 TECHNIQUES OF PLAY REVIEW

On the surface, a play that is staged (we call it stage drama here) seems most closely comparable to film. The theatre companies of

- Teachers and students have traditionally read plays without necessarily seeing them performed and have still managed to understand them and argue about them……..
- There is a logical and terminological distinction between a play and a performance of it. Coming out of the theatre, people can be heard making comments of the form that was a good/bad production of a good/bad play….”

It is argued here that the performance of a play is an equally legitimate and interesting object for consideration when we review a live performance of a play. Let us read a play review given below:

Flowers: Girish Karnad; cast Rajit Kapur, Director : Roysten Abel.

Girish Karnad’s Flowers is a lyrical monologue for a priest torn between his devotion to God and his carnal desire for his courtesan mistress. Body and soul have always been in conflict and have made for great literature and Karnad uses this underlying theme for the priest’s internal strife.

Flowers is directed by Roysten Abel with Rajit Kapur essaying the role of the priest. The experimental set is designed by Abel with lights by Arghya Lahiri making it a truly visual experience. The flip side is that the rich and lyrical text does not transcend into great performance on stage, and one is left with a static and rather detached experience instead of one that is intimate and enlightening. While the premise is interesting, the soul is missing which is why the play fails to engage you in its entirety. But definitely worth a watch.

Nirmala Ravindran

Observations:

- The name of the play, the cast and the director is given in the way you introduce a book or a film.
- The review begins by stating what the play is about in general terms. We learn that the play is a lyrical monologue for a priest torn between his devotion to god and his carnal desire for his mistress.

architectonic (i.e., having a clearly defined and artistically pleasing structure).

Our ragas and raginis, therefore, do not reside in mansions made from a hest of blueprints. Rather, “they are like magic mantras or like seeds that sprout in the minds of our musicians and rasika”, observe Vithal C. Nadkarni and Gurudev Sharan. It is in the course of an actual recital that, depending on the skill, sadhana and ‘mood’ that the musician, like the magician, aided by the sympathetic rapport of the audience, invokes the ragas and elaborates on forms. Hence, no two recitals of the same raga by two different masters can ever be alike. All are based on “shastriya” rules; yet each differs from the other like the myriad variations of shape in a single interminable river of ragas.

Indeed, the quality of a musical performance depends as much on the ability and imagination of the performer as on the receptivity of the listener, on his sensibility. Music cannot be appreciated in terms of analysis of its acoustic features. It is well remember that music has a profound effect on the psyche and its spiritual value cannot be brushed aside. Great music induces the rapture of the body and the mind and leaves the listener with an overwhelming experience.

Let us consider a musical review now and note the points for consideration in such reviews. Here is a review of Brij Narayan’s sarod album.

Brij Narayan: A review

Brij Narayan, the son of sarangi maestro Pandit Ram Narayan, chose to play the sarod instead of his father’s favorite instrument. He had developed and perfected a style influenced by various features of Narayan’s sarangi treatment, such as his taan sequences blended with some features of Ustad Ali Akbar Khan’s sarod playing style. In this album Narayan plays the morning raga Bilakhani Todi. The jod highlights the rhythmic phraseology beginning with the simple and culminating into layers of complex expression. It is followed by raga Mishra Piloo. The flight of improvisation has the element of romanticism and playfulness.

- The reviewer focuses on the narrative technique by stating the ways by which the story is developed. There is also a reference to the Taliban regime to give a local touch.
- He calls it “pulp fiction at its emotive best”.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS – 2

- The introduction stage includes the first two sentences.
- The middle stage includes the next two sentences upto “uttaranga of Kaushidhwani
- The remaining part constitutes the conclusion.



4.8 FURTHER READINGS

- David Herman: *Basic Elements of Narrative* (2009), Willey Blackwell, England.
- Girija Kumar : *Censorship in India* (1990), Vikas, New Delhi.
- Jame Monaco : How to read a Film (2009), Oxford.
- V. F. Perkins : Film as Film (1972), Pelican.



4.9 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

1. Relate the grounds for banning a book. Give an example of a book that has been banned and state the reason for its being banned. (Refer to a book that has not been named in the banned list given at 1.2.)
2. Contrast briefly the approach of presentation of content in a narrative text with that of a scientific text.
3. Relate two points of similarities between film and a novel.
4. State briefly in what way the film is different from a novel.