LITERATURE TO FILMS:
A STUDY OF SELECT WOMEN PROTAGONISTS
IN HINDI CINEMA

THESIS

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by

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CERTIFICATE

As required under the University Ordinance, OB-9.9(viii), I hereby certify that the thesis entitled, *Literature to Films: A Study of Select Women Protagonists in Hindi Cinema*, submitted by Mrs.Bharati P.Falari for the Award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English has been completed under my guidance. The thesis is the record of the research work conducted by the candidate during the period of her study and has not previously formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma, Associateship, Fellowship or other similar titles to her by this or any other University.

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DECLARATION

As required under the University Ordinance OB-9.9(v), I hereby declare that the thesis entitled, *Literature to Films: A Study of Select Women Protagonists in Hindi Cinema*, is the outcome of my own research undertaken under the guidance of Dr. (Mrs.) K.J.Budkuley, Professor & Head, Department of English, Goa University. All the sources used in the course of this work have been duly acknowledged in the thesis. This work has not previously formed the basis of any award of Degree, Diploma, Associateship, Fellowship or other similar titles to me, by this or any other University.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Today, we cannot imagine the modern Indian society without films. But it is also impossible to conceive of a film without a 'story'. A film must 'tell' and 'show' a story, unfolding it layer by layer, presenting the magic of the narrative on the silver screen. The stories that are rooted in culture are appreciated by the audience. More so, if they are familiar with them in the oral or written form. There has been an indelible bond between literature and films right from the beginning.

Indian Cinema, particularly, Hindi cinema has become a significant part of the Indian mainstream culture. It has moulded our views, guided our preferences and interests, and created deep-rooted values and norms. It is a unique brand with its inimitable style; enchanting the audience, drawing them into the magnetic spell of its fictitious world. This underscores its importance on the social firmament.

1.2 The pioneering of Indian Cinema

Dhundiraj Govind Phalke pioneered Indian Cinema with *Raja Harishchandra* (1913). Based on the puranic *katha,* it was Indian not only in its content but also in its value system. In fact, its entire crew was Indian. Phalke accomplished this feat when Indians were reeling under the colonial rule. Phalke had to tackle many hurdles in the making of his first film. The prejudices against women and the ignorance about the medium were so strong that Phalke could not engage a woman artist for the role of a queen. Finally, he had to cast a male to essay the role of a female in the film. *Raja*

Harishchandra gained great popularity. The film stirred the buried feelings of national pride since the film dealt with high moral ethos of the subcontinent.

Phalke's subsequent films from 1914 to 1919, *Mohini Bhasmasur, Satyavan Savitri, Lanka Dahan, Shri Krishna Janma* and *Kaliya Mardan* were all based on Indian puranic tales or myths. Many filmmakers followed the trend since Dadasaheb Phalke's films had become a huge success. This was the era of Silent films.

A brief overview of 'Silent Cinema' will acquaint us with the initial stage of the evolution process of Hindi Cinema.

1.2.1 Silent Cinema

The motion pictures technically arrived in the country via Bombay (present Mumbai) on July 7th, 1896. According to Rangoonwalla:

> What they stood for merits much more attention than the amazing and entertaining quality of a new gadget that could show "life-sized reproductions" of "living photographic pictures". Moreover, it was and has remained a matchless combination of art (creative input), science (equipment-processing), and commerce (box-office) (See *Encyclopaedia of Hindi Cinema*, 2003, 25).

The pioneers of cinema, Lumiere brothers perhaps envisioned the significance of the medium and felt the need to explain the new invention to the masses by making a short film, *Entry of Cinematographe* (1896).

Since India was a British colony, this marvel called Cinema was introduced in India within six months of its invention. It was also received enthusiastically by the urban elites as well as the masses. Short narrative films made in order to record significant events, such as *Delhi Durbar of Lord Curzon* (1903), *Royal visit to Calcutta* (1906) were British based films. Parallel to this were films such as *Great Bengal Partition*

Movement and Procession made by Jyotish Sarkar (1905). There was also a film on Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak's visit to Calcutta (Ibid, 28).

1.2.2 The 'talkies'

With the introduction of "sound", a major change occurred in the style, form and content of Cinema. The notion of so-called "purity" of the medium (Silent Cinema) claimed by a few filmmakers and artists was threatened since the arrival of *talkies* led to the dependence on literature i.e. novels, plays and stories. The *talkies* characterized by loud and lengthy dialogues, a dozen or more songs and the background music created *sound and fury* to such an extent that it numbed the senses and sensibilities of its audience.

The magic of silent cinema was lost. Many film-lovers of the golden era of silent cinema rue *this* "lost treasure". Nonetheless 'talkies' or *bolpat* had arrived for good or bad.

1.2.3 The introduction of censorship

The new medium's role as the reflector of the past and its potential for arousing the national spirit gradually grew. But with it, the apprehensions of its use for national cause began to haunt the British imperial power. The rulers were aware of the possible use of the medium for creating awareness about the socio-political conditions in India and for mobilizing the public opinion. They feared that cinema would be used to bestir the spirit of patriotism and restore national pride. The cautious authorities therefore decided to restrict the cinematic freedom of expression.

Although, Hollywood films depicting western culture and scenes which portrayed immoral, frivolous characters (specifically women), were projected as the ostensible

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cause for concern and for consequent imposition of censorship, the real motive behind this was muzzling political content.

Thus, the Cinematograph Act of 1918 came into being within two decades of the emergence of Cinema, and with it, began the era of film censorship in India. In fact, the following quote by Aruna Vasudev in *Liberty and License in the Indian Cinema* (1978), taken from a despatch of Government of India to the Secretary of State dated June 1,1922, is self-explanatory, "[T]he object of censorship is not merely to prevent the exhibition of obscene films but also of films that are politically objectionable" (As quoted in *So Many Cinemas*, 1996, 16).

Thus, the pretext 'politically objectionable films' was conveniently used to curb the spirit of freedom and nationalism which was on the rise. But, nothing could turn the tide of national consciousness once it had been set into motion. Only, the movie-maker learned to use subtler modes of depiction for what could be perceived as 'objectionable' by the political masters.

Gradually, social issues and even political concerns that were well-depicted in the stories, plays or novels of great literary figures began to be tactfully adapted and transmuted into celluloid version. Thus works of Rabindranath Tagore, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Munshi Premchand among others, were adapted into films, taking care not to ruffle the political feathers of censoring agencies. In fine, the bonding of literature and films grew by the day; and Cinema began to evolve its own 'language'.

1.2.4 Cinema and its language

The first 'story film' released in 1912 was *Pundalik*. It was based on a Marathi play and parts of play were filmed directly. However, this failed to provide much of an impetus to regular film-making, until the first 'talkie' *Alam Ara* (1931) hit the screen. While it was largely inspired by the histrionics of Parsi theatre, it created a new language, the 'language of cinema'.

Arun Kaul has also underscored the impact that this film created across regions, with an unprecedented merging and blending of folk forms with cinematic devices of narration. Elucidating the generic evolution that the cinematic medium had attained, Kaul observes that, *Alam Ara* had been "developed and refined to create a new entertaining art form, much like the *jatra* in Bengal, *nautanki* and *raslila* in Uttar Pradesh, and *tamasha* in Maharashtra, but only much, much more popular" (See *Encyclopaedia of Hindi Cinema*, 2003, 327).Thus was the language of Cinema sought to be created.

It was only natural that new nomenclatures should get attached to such a captivating and innovative medium. Kaul highlights the etymology of names that developed with the evolution of cinema. The "bioscope" became *"bol-pat"* (literally, the talking screen) in Maharashtra and Western India, and *"boi"* (literally, a book) in Bengal and Eastern India. These two epithets, in essence, explain the divergence in the two prevailing schools of Hindi Cinema (Ibid, 326). If one should use the nomenclatures as a clue, the former emphasized 'narrating' what is depicted; the other on enacting what is literary.

As such, the dependence of cinema on literature came to be cemented. Paradoxically, right from the beginning, whether in the case of silent cinema or the first *talkies*

(1931), there is strong evidence to show that inspired by the literary medium the cinematic medium has had the potential to carve out its distinct style, grammar, motifs -- in short, to make its 'language' visible. Moreover, such dependence on literature did not cripple the film medium; rather it helped it to grow from strength to strength, and in the process to fine tune its own language.

1.3 The influence of Literature on Hindi Cinema

The Bengali cinema, *boi,* was based primarily on Bengali works of writers who were well known, widely read, and very faithful to life in the region. Gradually, Hindi films also based on the works of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Rabindranath Tagore, Saratchandra Chaterjee, Subodh Ghosh, Bimal Mitra, and Banaphool began to be made. They reflected the ethos and sensitivities of then- united Bengal. In fact, even if some of these films were not the best Cinematic adaptations of literature, they still retained the 'colour and fragrance of the original works, thus, in essence, reflecting the sights and sounds of the land' (Ibid).

On the other hand, Bombay's *bol-pat* school embraced comedy, adventure, romance, mythology, history and action themes. People who had mastery over languages such as Aga Hashr Kashmiri on Urdu and Radheshyam Kathavachak on Hindi need a special mention because they were popular wordsmiths. The legendry Mohanlal Gopaldas Dave, an in-house writer at Kohinoor Film Company 'nativized' many American themes by casting them in the Indian mould.

While filmmakers of this time were driven by profit motive, there were a few exceptions like Himanshu Rai of Bombay Talkies and V.Shantaram of Prabhat films. Rai tackled burning social and contemporary themes in films such as *Achhut Kanya, Bandhan, Kangan, Jeevan Naiya* and *Janmabhumi.* V.Shantaram dealt with various

social concerns of great significance such as communal harmony (*Padosi)*, prejudices towards a prostitute (*Aadmi*), injustice against woman (*Duniya Na Mane)* and so on.

Gradually, V.Shantaram's film company Prabhat films came to reflect the literary and cultural ethos of Maharashtra, while Bengal school led by New Theatres, produced several social bilinguals in Hindi and Bengali, such as *Devdas, Chandidas, President* and *Dushman*, in keeping with its literary temper. In fine, the three studio-institutions namely, New Theatres, Prabhat, and Bombay Talkies created meaningful cinema and they were appreciated by the masses as well as film critics.

1.3.1 The decline of the studio system

The studio system declined with the emergence of *stars.* Literary figures such as Sadat Hasan Manto, Pandit Sudarshan, Amritlal Nagar, Premchand and others felt dejected because the filmmakers would expect them to modify the stories drastically for the box-office purpose. In fact, Munshi Premchand was so dismayed with the system that he left for good the city of Bombay in disgust.

But in post-independent India, a new breed of literary writers arrived as freelance dialogue writers. Some of them were well-known literary figures such as Krishan Chander, Rajinder Singh Bedi, Rahi Masoom Raza, Kamleshwar, Sharad Joshi, and others. These authors decidedly brought in their own aesthetics, within the limits of storyline and the parameters of screenplays given to them. Rajinder Singh Bedi later took up direction and made significant films like *Phagun* and *Dastak*.

The film themes based on the literary works of the authors from various parts of India had distinct regional flavour. For instance, the dialogues of *Mirza Ghalib* written by Rajindra Singh Bedi brought in the nuances of Urdu spoken in Shahjahabad (Old

Delhi) to greatly enhance the aesthetic flavour of this biopic. Much later, in the 1980s, a film based on the story penned by the Marathi author Jaywant Dalvi was adapted into a Hindi film, *Chakra*, wherein *tapori* Hindi mixed with the accent of Bijapur (Karnataka) was used to effectively underscore the credibility of the experience of slum-dwellers in Mumbai.

1.3.2 The great visionaries of Indian Cinema

Satyajit Ray, V. Shantaram, Mehboob Khan, Tapan Sinha, Mrinal Sen, Shyam Benegal are among some of the greatest visionaries of Indian Cinema. They created socially relevant celluloid works based on literary texts. Likewise Bimal Roy, a prominent filmmaker adapted several literary works and created a series of meaningful cinema which conveyed the message of social transition and universal brotherhood. Some of his well-known films are *Do Bigha Zameen, Parineeta, Biraj Bahu, Devdas, Sujata,* and *Bandini.* All these films were based on renowned literary works. He influenced several filmmakers such as Satyen Bose, Gulzar and Phani Mazumdar to name but a few. Roy chose stories which were contemporary and socially relevant. Interestingly, many of his films were women-oriented.

The strong connection between the films based on literary works and the concern for social reform through women-oriented themes provides a valuable insight into the process of social transition. The message is loud and clear: If the society has to be cured of its social evils, the beginning point has to be the development of positive attitude towards women. It is to the credit of the visionary filmmakers of our times that they saw this challenge and made it their commitment to yoke their creative energies to the cause of women-centric themes. It is an equally laudable matter that

they found literary works which could entice their creative genius and provoke their aesthetic calibre.

1.3.3 The changing trends

In fact the influence of literature on cinema paved a new way wherein filmmakers experimented with the film form and provided the audience with cinema that was more 'realistic'. Arun Kaul, the film critic provides an interesting account of the evolution of New Wave Cinema. Late 1960s and 1970s were undoubtedly heady days for the New Indian Cinema in Hindi. Members of the independent and parallel cinema movement who did not wish to remain confined within commercial constraints got a great fillip in the changing environment. They provided 'profound images, relationships, and characterizations' through their film narratives. Mani Kaul, M. S. Sathyu, K. A. Abbas created realistic depiction of human life and struggles. During this period, many literary works were adapted into Hindi Cinema. Films such as *Phir Bhi, Sara Akash, Uski Roti, Maya Darpan,* and *Duvidha* were off-beat films based on contemporary literature. The unconventional themes chosen for their films and true-to-life presentation style earned them appreciation in India and abroad.

Many filmmakers displayed their creative genius by synthesizing the virtues of literary works with the cinematic medium. Such films as *Bhavani Bhavai, Ardha Satya, Mirch Masala, Rajnigandha, Saudagar, Umrao Jaan, Hazaar Chaurasi Ki Maa,* among others, helped to redefine the role of cinema.

The educated middle class audience could relate to the themes and stories of the new *middle-of-the-road* genre of films that 'tried to marry the sensitivities of Indian literature with the commercial appeal of popular cinema' (Kaul, 2003, 330). These included *Teesri Kasam, Khushboo, Chit Chor, Rajanigandha, Uphaar, Swami, Ek*

Chadar Maili Si, Umrao Jaan, Ijazzat and so on. "While these films followed some of the dictates of mainstream cinema, and were partially or fully successful at the box-office, they did retain some of the aesthetic flavour of the originals which would otherwise not have found favour in the mainstream" (Ibid).

For instance, only a few filmmakers dared to confront the forgotten tragedy of *partition* of India. M. S. Sathyu's film *Garam Hawa* (1973) was based on a short story written by Ismat Chugtai. Much later, Govind Nihalani's TV serial *Tamas* was also based on the *partition* theme. Based on Amrita Pritam's novel *Pinjar* Chandraprakash Dwivedi made the film *Pinjar* (2003) which highlights the same subject and dwells on the consequences of such cataclysmic events on the vulnerable sections of society, mainly the women.

1.4 Women in Hindi Cinema: real or fictitious?

Since this study focuses on social concerns and issues which are women-centric, it will be worthwhile to review the portrayal of women in Hindi Cinema which has mostly created dominant male protagonists. This is not surprising since the Hindi film industry is itself male-dominated. Film scholars and critics opine that women represented on screen are very often the victims of the 'image' of womanhood based on stereotypes and clichés. Hence, it is interesting to understand the process of creating images into which women characters are conveniently cast.

1.4.1 Creating images

Women play different roles in the films, but they are mostly secondary. In many a films, the role of the mother is not only trivialized but also unrealistic. More often than not, she is projected as the fountain head of sacrifice and the epitome of justice.

In films such as *Mother India* or *Deevar*, for instance, the mother does not surrender to the unjust power even if the wrongdoer is her favourite son.

Scores of Hindi Cinema depict women protagonists either as a younger sister dependent on her brother for security, education and marriage or a self-sacrificing *didi*. The mother-in law is generally vindictive, cruel and is a tormentor of the heroine. The vamp is a sensuous, cabaret dancer whereas the heroine is always fair in complexion, beautiful and virtuous, except in films such as *Main Bhi Ladki Hum* or *Satyam Shivam Sundaram*, where the core issue itself focuses on her dark complexion or disfigured looks.

These are the *role types*, rather than the real characters, cast in the mould created by the patriarchal norms of the society. Thus, the gender stereotypes already existing in society have been unfortunately further strengthened by the film medium by reiterating the conventional image of the male and the female. These *images* have been created and sustained over a long time and the gullible audiences continue to accept them.

Indeed, the screen image reflects the patriarchal ideology. Mostly, the women are seen in the role of mother, sister, wife and so on, but they are rarely depicted as an individual. The aspect of female bonding too is ignored and the role of the women is trivialized. There is no space/scope provided to a female character carve an identity as an individual. She is seldom shown to be an intelligent, rational, assertive person. Either she is too arrogant and behaves like a spoilt brat (reformed by the hero, casting her into an image of ideal womanhood) or she is a perfect girl/woman, obedient and self-sacrificing. Ambitious, professional, successful women (the ones who dare to cross the threshold of the private sphere) are depicted as selfish individuals who are

made to pay a price for daring to be modern, ambitious and successful. The portrayal of women is thus, far from reality.

According to Vrinda Mathur:

> Events seldom catapult women characters of the Indian cinema to a white-hot spot. Women are shown as having no sphere of their own, no independent identity, no living space. The vitalizing power of the women characters is always absolutely ignored… They are mere fictional constructs (2002, 66).

No doubt, social issues concerning women such as dowry, rape, domestic violence, abduction are depicted in Hindi Cinema. But many a times, the distorted perception of the filmmaker and the sensationalization of the issues fails to achieve the desired objectives of social change or reform. The audience is carried away by the visual impact of the portrayal. They view and appreciate the film for its emotional appeal, rather than its intellectual provocation and aesthetic quality. In this context, Maithili Rao perceptively observes:

> Indian Cinema casts a mantle of invisibility over the very visible woman on the screen. Filmmakers seem to revel in depicting her physicality while her emotional, mental and psychic space is left unexplored. This is due to the obvious, conveniently alluring nature of the medium, but the challenge is to overcome this inherent limitation" (See *South Asian Cinema*, 2001,14).

Even a cursory glance at some potential themes handled with a commercial view by some filmmakers of repute will bear out the above view. For instance, B. R. Chopra's film *Insaaf Ka Tarazu* (1980) was based on the serious issue of rape and the failure of judicial system to deliver justice. The rape scenes created sensation rather than sensitivity and concern. As a result the film did not succeed in fulfilling its social responsibility but enjoyed tremendous box-office success. Such films are reminders

that it is not only sufficient for the filmmakers to depict the ugly social realities impacting women's lives but be aware of the responsibility to change the conservative attitudes and conventional perceptions of the audience.

Fortunately, a few filmmakers take the cinematic medium seriously and offer insight into social reality, even while providing entertainment.

1.4.2   Women-centric Cinema

In this regard, filmmakers like Bimal Roy, Basu Bhattacharya, Hrishikesh Mukherjee, Shyam Benegal have given a great impetus to meaningful cinema. The depiction of women in their films has indeed been very distinct in being realistic, thought provoking and yet aspiring towards social change.

One of the significant social problems addressed by the likes of Himanshu Rai and Bimal Roy has been the unjust caste system and the evil of 'untouchability' that has plagued the Indian society for several centuries. Many other great visionaries in the field of cinema have also made a remarkable attempt to sensitize the masses about this crucial social issue.

Interestingly, the main protagonists of most of the films based on the theme of 'untouchability' were women. Therefore, the two-fold issues of gender oppression/inequality blended almost effortlessly with the issue of discrimination based on the caste system. The social reality was well-manifested and effectively represented by combining these two major aspects of gender-based discrimination and social marginalization in films like *Bandit Queen, Rudaali* and so on.

Filmmakers, such as Bimal Roy, Shyam Benegal, Shekhar Kapur have defied the traditional stereotypes, roles and image of women protagonist and have redefined the

roles, image and given a powerful *"voice"* to women protagonists in Hindi cinema. Thereby, they have drawn attention and initiated a discussion regarding issues primarily focussed on women but relevant to society at large.

Interestingly, many films based on women-centric themes were adaptations of literary works. Bimal Roy made landmark films based on popular novels written by Saratchandra Chatterjee, Subodh Ghosh among others, just as Shyam Benegal also successfully adapted several literary works into films. These filmmakers chose texts and stories which mainly focused on women protagonists, and tried to explore their strengths, status and struggles. In so doing, they were instrumental in creating on the celluloid, some timeless classics that could give their literary sources a stiff challenge.

1.5   Scope of the present study

Since several films based on literature have contributed to creating meaningful cinema, and since no concerted efforts have been made to study the portrayal of the female protagonist in films based on women related themes, the present study has the scope   to focus on women-centric cinema based on literary works that foreground women protagonists. The title of this study is thus *"Literature to Films: A study of Select Women Protagonists in Hindi Cinema"*. This work takes up the study of the portrayal of women protagonists in the films made during the period ranging from 1957-2003, along with the texts on which they have been based. Among other things, it also attempts to understand to what extent the filmmakers have been tuned to women-centric issues and whether the original literary work has inspired a realistic and sensitive portrayal of women protagonist.

1.6 Aim and objectives of study

The study undertakes to analyse select women protagonists presented on the celluloid by sensitive directors in comparison with their portrayal in the literary works on which their films are based. Thereby, it attempts to understand the process of transmutation from literature to films with respect to women protagonist and explore the relationship between literature and films, to arrive at a rational understanding of the impact of literature on cinema. Thus, while this study will examine the bond between the two genres, the key focus will be the re-presentation of women protagonist in Hindi Cinema based on the literary works.

The following objectives have been identified in planning the course of this study:

- To highlight the relationship between Cinema and Literature and provide greater insights into the nature of dependence/interdependence between the two media.

- To discuss the inherent contrast as well as compatibility between the two media as modes of expression/communication.

- To focus on the women-oriented films dealing with a wide spectrum of issues related to women.

- To investigate the degree of sensitivity revealed by the male directors in handling issues and subjects related to women.

- To study the significance of cinema as a form of mass-media and the relative significance of cinema and literature.

- To study the emerging women subjectivities as represented in Cinema in post-independence period.

- To understand the depiction of women protagonists in the literary and cinematic texts from sociological as well as feminist theoretic perspectives.

- To study the impact of the various cinematic devices used by the filmmakers during the process of transmutation.

- To compare the vision/perspective of film director vis-à-vis the author.

1.6.1 List of selected films based on respective literary texts

1. *Mother India* (1957), remake of *Aurat* (1940), inspired by the novel *The Mother* (1934) written by Pearl Buck.

2. *Sujata* (1959) based on the novella *Sujata* (2nd edition 2001) by Subodh Ghosh.

3. *Teesri Kasam* (1966), based on *Teesri Kasam, Arthaat Mare Gaye Gulpham* (1956) by Phanishwarnath Renu.

4. *Bhumika* (1977) based on *Sangtye Aika* (1970), an autobiography of Hansa Wadkar.

5. *Chakra* (1980) based on the novel *Chakra* (1974) written by Jaywant Dalvi, translated into English by Gauri Deshpande.

6. *Umrao Jaan* (1981) based on the novel *Umrao Jan Ada* (1982) written by Mohammad Hadi Ruswa, translated into English by Khushwant Singh and M.A.Husaini.

7. *Ek Chadar Maili Si* (1986) based on the novel *Ek Chadar Maili Si* (1967) by Rajinder Singh Bedi and translated into English by Khushwant Singh.

8. *Rudaali* (1993), based on a story *Rudali* (1980; 4th ed. 1997) written by Mahasweta Devi.

9. *Bandit Queen* (1994) based on the biography titled *India's Bandit Queen* (1993) written by Mala Sen.

10. *Pinjar* (2003), based on the novel *Pinjar* (1969) written by Amrita Pritam.

1.6.2 Criteria for selecting the films

- All the above mentioned films are either women-oriented or have a major role for women-protagonists.

- The films provide a vivid spectrum of issues and concerns with respect to women such as prostitution, abduction, untouchability, exploitation, destitution, remarriage, widowhood, familial and marital issues.

- The films are based on great works of literature.

- The authors included are male as well as female so as to provide greater insights into their works without gender-bias.

- The films selected do not conform to the boundaries of commercial /art films.

- They focus on the marginalized women and represent women of different strata of Indian society cutting across the regional, communal, rural/urban, literacy/illiteracy barriers.

- The directors chosen are both male and female so as to investigate whether men have handled women-oriented issues with care and sensitivity.

- The films chosen cover a period of about 50 years (1957 to 2003) i.e. post-Independence Hindi Cinema.

1.6.3 Delimitation

- Only Hindi films have been short listed for this study.

- Films made during 1957-2003 have been selected for study.

- Not more than ten films are taken up for this study.

- All the filmmakers whose films are selected are Indian and so are the authors whose works have been taken up for the study, except for the source text for

Aurat which was inspired by Pearl Buck's *The Mother*. (However, the scripts for both these films have been written by Indian writers).

- Major focus is on socially volatile issues which are essentially women-centric. The "voice' and the "image" of mainly the women-protagonist is highlighted and discussed.

The text and the reference material available and accessible in the languages known to this researcher i.e. English, Hindi, and Marathi, have been used for this study. Where necessary, material has been translated into English. Unless otherwise specified, it has been done by me.

1.7 Bases for grouping of the films

Although all the films are women–centric and focus on social and gender issues, for convenience, the selected films have been broadly categorized in three groups: such as, films based on classics revisited, those that are biography-based, and, those based on life-impacting issues or events.

1.7.1 Classics revisited

Three films, namely, *Mother India, Sujata* and *Teesri Kasam* have been considered as classics given their superlative quality, established reputation and uninterrupted appeal to the audience. Of these *Mother India* (1957) was a remake of *Aurat* (1940) by the same filmmaker, Mehboob Khan. Both the films are considered to be great classics. *Mother India* can be called an epic for its range and grandeur which continue to capture the minds of the audiences and inspire the filmmakers. The source text which inspired the film *Aurat* was Pearl Buck's classic *The Mother* (1934) and the film *The Good Earth.*

The screenplay was modified to suit the Indian culture and ethos by the screenplay writer, Babubhai Mehta. This film is a good example of how a foreign literary classic could be transmuted into cinematic version which is 'Indianized' to such an extent that it hardly resembles the original. So also, a sea-change in the perception and the vision of the filmmaker with regard to the style, substance and various layers involved in the film *Mother India* as compared to *Aurat* is evident.

The film *Aurat* (1940) made in pre-independence era was a black and white film. Its simplistic style and realistic portrayal was markedly different from the techno-coloured mega venture designed to address various social issues that plagued India on the threshold of Independence.

The film *Mother India*, heavily coloured with a clear political agenda, (Nehruvian ideology of rebuilding and modernizing the country), coupled with the portrayal of "ideal womanhood", gained unparalleled popularity not only in India but in many parts of the world. The fact that Mehboob created a 'woman icon' on celluloid, rather than a male as was in vogue then, brings to the fore an important message: that for social change and progress woman empowerment is the prerequisite. However, it is good to remember that, the notion of woman empowerment rooted in the Indian tradition and depicted in the film may not coincide with the feminist ideologies propagated in the West.

Sujata (1959), a classic directed by the noted filmmaker Bimal Roy, deals with the issue of untouchability. It is based on a poignant story by the same title written by the well-known Bengali writer, Subodh Ghosh. Known for his realistic approach but idealistic vision, the filmmaker makes a sincere attempt to sensitize the masses about the deep-rooted social evil of *untouchability*. The theme of the film was indeed very

relevant for its time. The film has a tender romantic flavour and is appeal to the audience's sense of justice and their ideal of love.

Teesri Kasam (1966) can be described as sheer 'poetry' on celluloid. Its simplicity, melodious folksongs and the spontaneity of character would have been impossible to re-create on screen had it not been for the craftsmanship of the author Phanishwarnath 'Renu', the lyrical folk themes of Shailendra and the focused direction of Basu Bhattacharya. In the text, the male protagonist, Heeraman is the central figure. Nonetheless, there is a marked difference in the portrayal of the woman protagonist 'created' in the screenplay, which makes the study of the film significant. This film proves that a good literary work can be effectively *re-created* into a celluloid experiences. Analysis of the prejudices against the *nautch* girl, Heerabai, who performs in *nautanki* (folk drama), and stereotypical view of her, form the core of the study.

1.7.2 Films based on biographies

Three films, namely, *Bhumika, Umrao Jaan* and *Bandit Queen*, which are based on the actual life story of the protagonist, narrated either by the authorial self or by another writer, have been grouped together because they provide a glimpse into the 'real' world of experience. *Bhumika* (1977) directed by Shyam Benegal is inspired by an autobiography titled *Sangtye Aika* (1970) of the noted actor Hansa Wadkar. The filmmaker was motivated to make this unconventional and bold film because he wished to highlight the struggles of a celebrity Usha (alter ego of Hansa), who was successful in her professional life but was exploited by the patriarchal family set-up in personal life. Benegal makes use of various devices to 'tell' and 'show' the story

innovatively by using suitable fictionlization. Therefore, this film is a good study in transmutation across genres.

Umrao Jaan (1981), an ambitious film directed by Muzaffar Ali, is based on the popular novel *Umrao Jan Ada* penned by the Urdu novelist Mohammad Hadi Ruswa and translated into English by Khushwant Singh and M.A.Husaini. The novel was hugely popular. The story of the well-known courtesan of Lucknow is a *period* film and it unfolds the life and times of Umrao Jan. The film highlights social problems such as abduction, prejudices and biases against courtesans, commodification of women and rejection by their own family that prey upon the women, victim of circumstances, for no fault of their own.

Bandit Queen (1994) is a well-acclaimed film directed by Shekhar Kapur. It is based on the detailed biography of Phoolan Devi titled *India's Bandit Queen* (1993) written by Mala Sen. The author has gathered data from various sources including the jail diaries of Phoolan. Shekhar Kapur's endeavour to present the stark reality, depicting of extreme violence against Phoolan Devi won him both, applause as well as severe criticism. Gender and caste issues are combined in the focus of the film and so it provides a good opportunity to investigate the social dynamics related to the gender oppression. The film can be considered as a landmark in the annals of the contemporary Hindi cinema, for it did away with the age old taboos in the field of visual representation of reality. It depicted with utmost sincerity, the life of a so-called low-caste *shudra* woman born and bred in the Chambal Valley. Victimized and oppressed as a woman as well as low caste, the protagonist is defiant to the core, and her retaliation against her oppressors provides scope to study the resistance of the female.

1.7.3 Films based on social-issues impacting women's lives

Four films namely, *Chakra, Ek Chadar Maili Si, Rudaali* and *Pinjar* have been grouped together because they are fictions which represent grave social issues that impact women non-entities belonging to the ordinary strata/stations in life. *Chakra* (1980) was a maiden film by the enthusiastic and committed filmmaker Rabindra Dharmaraj. Based on the novel with the same title written in the year 1974 by the famous author Jaywant Dalvi, it revolves around Amma, the main protagonist who chases her dream of having a modest home and security amidst the filthy, substandard living conditions in Dharavi slums of Bombay. The film depicts a slice-of-life through the portrayal of Amma's hopes and despair. Many issues related to the slum-dwellers in urban society, such as crime, alcoholism, prostitution, poverty are reflected in the theme. The element of class-conflict too, is well-depicted.

Ek Chadar Maili Si (1986) directed by Sukhwant Dhadda is based on the novel with the same title by the famous Urdu author, Rajinder Singh Bedi, who wished to direct a film based on it. But his sudden demise left the project incomplete. The author won the prestigious Sahitya Academy award for the text. The story revolves around Rano, the female protagonist who is compelled to marry her brother-in-law after the sudden death of her husband. The film brings to the fore the role of family and the patriarchal *Village Panchayats* in shaping the destiny of women. It highlights the inner strength of women in dealing with the personal crises and being able to rise above the mundane.

Rudaali (1993) by Kalpana Lajmi is based on a short story with the same title name by Mahasweta Devi. Apart from being a woman-centric film, it is chosen for study because both, the author and the filmmaker are women. This provides scope to

understand and analyse 'women's experience and perspective' on issues pertaining to women. The story revolves around Sanichari, the woman protagonist and had inspired a theatre adaptation as well. Mahasweta Devi being a renowned social activist, journalist with a strong leftist ideology, it is worthwhile to explore the author's portrayal and vision vis-à-vis the filmmaker's.

Pinjar (2003) was Chandraprakash Dwivedi's film-directorial debut (after his popular T.V serial, *Chanakya*). The original text (1969) with the same title was authored by the well-known Punjabi author and poet, Amrita Pritam. The story of Puro, her abduction in order to settle family feud, her forcible conversion to Islam and the *partition* of India are well synchronized to place in perspective gender issues. The partition was a cataclysmic event which led to the division of India. It led to an unprecedented violence and bloodshed which has scarred the psyche of people on both the sides of the border. Since the author is a woman, her perspective and the solution she offers towards issues like abduction, violence, forced marriage and displacement of women against their will become all the more relevant for this study. A brief analysis of films based on Partition-related themes is also undertaken to place these issues in perspective.

1.8 Research Methodology

The following has been the research methodology broadly followed during the course of the present study:

- Repeated viewing of the films chosen for the study.

- Study of literary works associated with the films selected for study.

- Use of periodicals, books, newspaper cuttings, clippings of articles, reviews and allied material.

- Library Research mainly at National Film Archives of India, Pune.

- Attending the Film Appreciation Course, organized by Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) in collaboration with National Film Archives of India (NFAI), to get a brief idea about various facets of filmmaking.

- Study of relevant feminist and sociological theories.

- Attending Seminars, Conferences and presenting papers related to the subject to get a clear view on relevant issues.

- Attending International Film Festival in India (IFFI) held in Goa and gathering relevant information/material.

- Accessing websites and other relevant archival sources.

- Interviews of filmmakers and film scholars.

1.9 Literature survey

Many well-known personalities have written about the relationship between literature and cinema, as well as, the portrayal of women in Hindi cinema. These include filmmakers, scriptwriters, actors who have first-hand knowledge and experience about films; and those who analyse various facets of the film medium such as film scholars and critics.

Sources of information are also popular magazines and newspaper issues which carry glossy pictures and peppy tales about the personal and professional life of actors, which provide information on the art of film making, box-office successes, film reviews and interviews of filmmakers, actors, critics and scholars from diverse fields about films and filmmaking.

One of the greatest filmmakers who has made the world appreciate Indian Cinema and has brought glory to the Indian Film Industry, Satyajit Ray, seems to be as comfortable with pen-paper as with camera. He has expressed his views and experiences in simple and lucid manner in his text titled *Our Films Their Films* (1993). In this book, the author has provided insights into topics such as New Wave Cinema, influence of literature on cinema and his own preference for adapting literary works by Bibhutibhushan Bandopadhyaya, Rabindranath Tagore, Munshi Premchand and others, to celluloid.

B. D. Garga's mammoth-sized text dealing with history of the Motion Picture in India, titled *So Many Cinemas* (1996) provides valuable information and interesting anecdotes. So also, *Encyclopaedia of Hindi Cinema* (2003) has a string of articles on the evolution of various facets of cinema. Scholarly writings of Gulzar, Bhawana Somaaya, Govind Nihlani, Arun Kaul, Saibal Chatterjee, Aruna Vasudeva, Maithali Rao, Vijay Tendulkar and many more have been included in this encyclopaedia.

The Bollywood Saga (2004) by D. Raheja and J. Kothari gives a brief account of Hindi Cinema. M. Madhav Prasad's scholarly work *Ideology of the Hindi Film* (2011), Gayatri Chatterjee's award winning work *Mother India* (2002) articles on literature and cinema by Arun Kaul, Morris Beja and others have been very useful. Great filmmakers like Ingmar Bergman, Gulzar, Satyajit Ray, Shyam Benegal, Girish Karnad, have provided diverse views on the issue of 'compatibility versus incompatibility' between literature and cinema.

 Materials related to the discussion and paper presentation in the Seminars organised by FTII, Pune and Lady Sri Ram College in the year 1977, helped immensely to

understand the viewpoints of filmmakers, authors, scholars on the relationship between the two genres.

However, attending one month film appreciation course in May-June 2008 organized by FTII (Film and Television Institute of India) in collaboration with NFAI (National Film Archives of India), Pune, shaped interest in Cinema and directed attention to its many components.

Recently, attending a conference titled 'Literature to Cinema: Adaptation, Appropriation and Adulteration' organized at National Institute of Technology, Durgapur in West Bengal (1-3 June 2013) has also provided useful and scholarly perspectives on the interaction and interdependence between the two media.

Since this study focuses on the social issues concerning women protagonist, sociological as well as feminists theories were consulted. Theories related to class struggle put forth by Karl Marx and the Freudian theories of psychoanalysis have been found to be largely beneficial to this study. Theories related to Marxian feminism also helped to understand the nature of patriarchy, and therefore, the present study has incorporated some of these ideas to the extent deemed adequate. George Ritzer's work titled *Contemporary Sociological Theory* and Jeff Hearn's work titled *The Gender of Oppression* (1987) were particularly useful in the analysis of the literary and cinematic texts as well.

A Companion to Feminist Philosophy (1998) edited by Jaggar and Young which is a compilation of feminist theories related to postmodern subjectivity, psychoanalytic feminism, gender, body politics, offered very useful insights to this study with regard to various dimensions of gender, gender oppression and exploitation. It has also helped question the existing notions of gender, equality and empowerment. This text

also contains articles on 'The Indian Subcontinent' which have been relevant to this research.

The films are 'cultural constructs', and therefore, it was necessary to study the Indian films in social context, and obtain critics' notion on social dimension of women-related issues so as to provide insights into 'women's experience and perspective'.

This study has made use of the notion of the 'private versus public sphere' analyzed by Geeti Sen, 'visual pleasure and narrative cinema' by Laura Mulvey', 'distorted mythical symbols' analysed by Shoma Chatterjee, Semiotic approach in the study of the film *Bandit Queen* by Deepanjana Danda and several other significant works on film and feminism. These ideas helped to understand and analyse both, literary and cinematic texts.

The feminist and sociological theories provided a theoretical perspective and have widened the scope of the study.

1.10 Brief chapter- outline

The following is a brief outline of the chapter layout of this study:

Chapter One: Introduction

As seen already, this chapter provides a brief overview of the evolution of Hindi Cinema and the dependence of cinema on literary works. A brief analysis of the portrayal of female protagonist in Hindi Cinema is also highlighted. The chapter includes aim, objectives, delimitation of the study and the bases for grouping of the films.

Chapter Two: Transmutation: Literature to Films

Since the emphasis is on the comparative study of two genres, namely, literature and films, it has been imperative to explore the relationship between these two art forms and study the process of transmutation involved. The issue of compatibility and incompatibility between the two genres is discussed in this Chapter and the devices used for transmutation such as flashbacks, dreams, motifs, mirror-images, songs and their impact on the portrayal of women-protagonist have also been analysed.

The cultural context of a given work – whether a literary text or a film-- is essential for decoding the languages of both, literature as well as cinema. As such, the study has emphasized the significance of the cultural perspective.

Chapter Three: **Emergent female subjectivities in Hindi Cinema**

As this study deals with portrayal of women protagonists, feminist theories that are relevant and helpful to analyse the issues related to gender dynamics, gender inequalities and gender oppression are discussed in this chapter. Simone de Beauvoir's renowned work *The Second Sex* and Laura Mulvey's essay on 'Visual Pleasures and Narrative Cinema' have been used to provide a theoretical basis to the discussion of female subjectivities.

Division of labour being a crucial factor which defines gender roles, the relevance of the public/private domain with regard to the status as well as the predicament of the female protagonist is also discussed. Marxist and Freudian theories have been used to highlight the issues related to gender-based subjugation of women. So also, a few relevant post-modern feminist theories have been utilised where necessary to throw the relevant issues into focus.

Chapter Four: Women-centric issues and gender relationship in Hindi Cinema

This Chapter dwells on gender-related issues such as abduction, rape, domestic violence, displacement, oppression among others. Since, inequality, oppression and prejudice against women have been systematically legitimized by the powerful class/caste hierarchical structure frequently through Panchayats and since this institution has been used to subjugate women, films such as *Ek Chadar Maili Si, Pinjar, Bandit Queen* have been drawn on to substantiate this observation.

This Chapter argues that although women in Hindi cinema are more often than not projected as beautiful and feminine, they are generally accorded a secondary status, and that the male is represented as aggressive and assertive. The gender-related binaries created by Hindi cinema have continued to impact not only the societal reality but quite often the perspective of women-centric films as well.

Chapter Five: **Conclusion**

It is the final chapter of this thesis. This chapter lists major findings and the conclusions based on the findings. Criteria used for reporting the conclusion have been:

1. Major changes/modifications/adulterations in the adaptations (focus will be restricted to the portrayal of women protagonists).
2. 'Voice' that emanates from the portrayal of female protagonist.
3. 'Image' of womanhood that emerges as a result of the portrayal of female protagonist.

The 'Voice' and 'Image' of the women protagonist will be discussed with regard to both the literary texts and the celluloid text, since the study basically deals with the process of transmutation from one genre to the other.

1.11 Relevance of this study

The significance of literary works to Hindi Cinema, as well as the contribution of Hindi cinema to social change has been studied within the chronological frame of nearly five decades. The study will help to place in perspective the deep-seated connection with and the profound influence of Literature on Hindi Cinema. Since the post-Independence era has been considered as a time-frame to provide insight into the process of re-presentation of womanhood in a span of about fifty years, it is expected that this study will help map the progress made by Hindi cinema over the last few decades.

In recent times, there has been an unprecedented concern over the representation of women in media (including films) that has triggered a nationwide debate on the subject. This makes the present study that also deals with 're-presentation' further relevant and timely.

India is the largest producer of films in the world. Unfortunately, the mammoth output is not matched by the studies on films. As such, the present endeavour is expected to add to this meagre domain of study and elicit further academic interest in film studies.

CHAPTER TWO

Transmutation: Literature to Cinema

2.1 Introduction

Since, this study deals with cinematic adaptations of literary works, the present Chapter explores the relationship between the two media, viz., literature and cinema. Thereby, it tries to elucidate the process of transmutation involved in re-creating a literary text into a celluloid one focussing on the portrayal of women protagonists in the films chosen for the study.

But juxtaposing an entire literary work with its celluloid counterpart for scrutinising its characterization, details of plot-structure, modes of narration, and social relevance would be an unwieldy and cumbersome process.

Hence, it was decided to identify for study a core component, which inevitably represents all these aspects of the selected literary work and one which is invariably reproduced in the film based on the given literary work. The portrayal of the female protagonist was thus selected as this core component, because that would represent the central character motif of both the genres. Moreover, it would also provide an insight into the vast, subaltern segment of society, and offer a basis to gauge the societal relevance of the literary work and the process of transmutation that occurs when a filmmaker adapts a literary portrayal to celluloid.

2.2 Literature and Cinema

Here, a juxtaposition of Literature and Cinema would be gainful to understand their relationship.

Film and literature both tend to be fundamentally representational arts and reflect the world around, often realistically. However, the reality one encounters in such representations is not the crude replica of real-life per se. In fact, particularly,

> [F]ilm from the outset veered away from direct recording of life towards a very different variety of "realism" – a variety much more consistent with the "realism" of imaginative literature, in which not life but its fictional representation is rendered truthfully, credibly, "realistically" (Boyum,1992,21).

Yet, there is a difference between a celluloid text and a literary one. A celluloid text or film is not presented to the audience directly as a written text is made available to the readership. It passes through multiple filters of transmutation before it reaches the screen. For one, it is perceived by director, enacted by actors, shot by the cameraman, edited, dubbed and then released after passing the censor board. Of all these interventions, the abstract but crucial one is of the director's, and the concrete indivisible one is the cameraman's. In fact,

> … the camera totally controls (if not absolutely dictates) our perception – determining our point of view, establishing our closeness or distance to figures and actions, blurring our focus or sharpening it, selecting our angle of vision. And, not only telling us in this way what to see but how to see, it does more than assume the function of a narrator: it becomes equivalent of a narrator, a cinematic story-teller itself (Ibid, 26).

As such, the filmmaker's choice in using various cinematic devices for transmuting literary text to a celluloid one reinforces the role of camera as much as the creativity of the filmmaker. The filmmaker chooses devices of transmutation while the camera helps to execute them. But the filmmaker is selective in identifying the components of his narrative based on a literary text, and works with a screenplay duly in place.

Only then can the camera-narrator mould the perceptions of the audience. In a way, the filmmaker not only 'depicts' stories and guides the audience to 'view', but also offers a 'point of view'. This process of transmutation can be called an adaptation of a literary work.

Films, like literary works can tell stories and make reference to "imaginary worlds". A literary text like the novel, for instance, and a film both involve *character* and *action* to create a world of fiction. The most crucial likeness between the two media is this capacity to create a fictitious world. The novel may indeed be, as Jean Mitry claims, "a narrative that organizes itself in a world; the film, which organizes itself in a narrative" (Ibid, 20). However, to narrate the fictional reality, each requires a 'language'. The language of cinema, although distinct, is closely connected to the language of literature. It involves both, visual images and sounds, since cinema is an audio-visual medium. Yet cinema depends a lot on verbal language to create an exclusive impact.

For instance, in the film *Pinjar*, Puro, the female protagonist says, *"Koi ladki Hindu ya Musalman, jo bhi ladki lautkar apne thikane pahunchti hai, samjho usi ke sath meri atma bhi thikane pahunch gayi"* (Irrespective of, whether a girl is a Hindu or a Muslim, if she reaches her destination, think that with her the soul of Puro has reached home). This message could be conveyed effectively only through the language of words. That is why, even during the era of Silent Cinema, filmmakers used text-cards along with pictures to communicate verbal message. After all, as Boyum points out:

> [T]hough words and pictures may be inherently different classes of signs, the simple fact is that
>
> both are signs…. part of the entire complex of human communication, part of our total manner of

making meaning…It can inform, it can explain, it can persuade and it shares with the verbal language the function that makes such discourse possible: It can create a "text", otherwise known as a movie (Ibid, 13).

2.3 Adaptations and the issue of fidelity

Many questions are raised about the crucial issue of adaptation. Whether adaptations can be considered legitimate or worthwhile? The concern seems to be mainly about the 'originality' of the work. Ingmar Bergman for one has vehemently opposed the dependence of films on literature. But then, Ingmar was a genius, and could create 'auteur cinema'. Ironically, the scripts of his films such as *Wild Strawberries, Seventh Seal* are regarded as texts of great literary value in their own right, and are valuable documents to establish how literature gets created or impacted through films.

The French director Alain Resnais has also said that for him adapting a novel for one of his own films would seem –since the writer of the book has already "completely expressed himself" – "a little like re-heating a meal." (as qtd. by Beja Morris, 1979, 79)

Resnais' views may not be acceptable to all, since there are filmmakers who have based their works on a story or a novel and yet have successfully re-interpreted and re-created the original, using their creative liberty and providing their own inputs.

Adaptations of literary works such as *Guide* (based on R.K. Narayan's novel of the same title), *Devdas* (Saratchandra Chatterjee's novel by the same title) could be cited as relevant examples. A film can surpass the original text in terms of style, content and presentation. *Teesri Kasam* far exceeds in its impact, whether artistic, aesthetic or emotive, its source text, *Mare Gaye Gulfam*. It may seem paradoxical that at times, it

is the maxim of 'infidelity' to the original rather than 'fidelity' that has created landmark films, and the above examples largely illustrate this maxim.

This raises several crucial questions regarding adaptations: Are there a set of rules to be followed by the filmmaker for adapting a literary piece? Which are these rules? Can a filmmaker be totally faithful to the original work? Should he/she be faithful in the first place? What should concern a filmmaker's mind: the integrity of the original work, or the integrity of the film? The views of critics as well as filmmakers are varied.

To many the idea/viewpoint that the original book is like "raw-material" to be worked with, rather than a sacred text to be copied, is a recurrent one. For Bela Balazs, "[N]early every artistically serious and intelligent "adaptation" is a "re-interpretation" of that raw-material." (Ibid, 82)

But John Houston, a filmmaker, views his role and responsibility differently, "I don't seek to interpret, to put my own stamp on the material. I try to be as faithful to the original material as I can. . . . In fact it's the fascination that I feel for the original that makes me want to make it into a film." (Ibid, 83)

A similar rationale/ thought is shared by Bimal Roy, who has tried to remain as faithful as possible to the original works such as *Sujata.* However, not all literary works can be adapted. 'Adaptability' of a text is perhaps a pre-requisite. It was the screen-play like quality of the original work *Sujata*, which not only had a socially relevant theme but strong characterization of Sujata, the female protagonist, that inspired Roy to be so faithful to the source text.

Whereas, Kalpana Lajmi has shifted the focus of the original text *Rudali*, written by Mahasweta Devi considerably in her celluloid adaptation by the same title. The Marxist angle focussed by the author Mahasweta Devi, has been considerably diluted in order to accommodate the romantic dimension 'created' for the film, thus altering the characterization of the female protagonist and the thematic concerns of the source text.

Francois Truffaut has said that he didn't want to make films for people who don't read. This makes us reflect upon a filmmaker's views on the interconnectedness of literature and films.

2.3.1 Relationship between 'word' and 'image'

Literature is a purely verbal medium, whereas Cinema is a combination of images with words. Hence, it makes a great emotional and aesthetic appeal to the viewer. No wonder, quite often the intellectual content tends to be brushed aside and emotional component gets magnified. Hence, Cinema may contain an overdose of melodrama as is the case with some Hindi films. It may also have a wide-ranging synthesis of audio-visual substance, as for instance, in *Mother India* wherein a song such as *"Holi aai re kanhai rang chalke suna de zara bansuri"* is depicted with flashbacks, dance, varying moods, emotions, and the situation of the characters at that given moment. All these need to be decoded to grasp their implication.

The 'decoding' of images and words necessitates analysis of motifs, songs, stories (especially the folktales and puranic stories) and perceiving the 'bases for their inclusion in films and their contribution to the narrative'. In *Mother India,* Mehboob, the filmmaker, connects the narrative with these elements rooted in the folk-culture. *"Holi aai re"* provides ample opportunities to 'connect', which adds to the richness of

the cinematic text and to the depth of the spectator's perception of its content as well as its context through the many messages that are transmitted simultaneously. This brings to mind the comparable approach in a purely 'world dominated' text like the novel;

> Perhaps, the most common distinction is one that sees the novel as more appropriate to the presentation of inner mental states, while the film is seen as being better able to show what people do and say than what they think or imagine. The reason is that film depicts what is external and visible, physical and material (Beja, 1979, 57).

It is, thus, easy to understand why it is frequently assumed that a "psychological" novel will adapt less well than an "action" novel. However, the adaptation of any literary text will depend on the perception and creative ability of a filmmaker to transmute it into a celluloid text.

In fact, Stanley Kubrick, opines that in adapting literary text, it is easier to invent external action as an "objective correlative of the book's psychological content" than it is to invent a character and a motivation for action plots lacking them (See Beja, 1979, 57).

The *voice-over* picked up from literature is an important Cinematic device to convey inner thoughts. *Voice over* is a term of an off-screen voice heard "over" the scene we are seeing; the voice may be that of a narrator, or that of a character who is in the scene but not actually talking aloud. Ingmar Bergman's well-known film, *Wild Strawberries* makes extensive use of the voice-over, flashbacks and dreams.

Biographies and autobiographies provide a good scope for the use of voice-over, interior monologue (a technique used to record stream of consciousness), dream and flashback techniques. A number of soliloquies could be effectively presented by using

these techniques. These devices (dreams, interior monologues and flashbacks) are often used in the original texts as well.

Often, verbal devices such as the voice-over, narration and dialogue are used to get around a fundamental limitation within the visual image; for it cannot easily and immediately convey abstract concepts.

Contradictory to the popular perception that film as a medium is complex rather than simple (in content, not execution) Budd Schulberg argues that the film:

> ....has no time for […] the essential digression. The "digression" of complicated, contradictory character. The "digression" of social background. The film must go from significant episode to more significant episode in a constantly mounting pattern. It's an excited form. But it pays a price for this excitement. It cannot wander as life wanders, or pause as life always pauses, to contemplate the incidental or the unexpected (Ibid, 59).

On the other hand, a literary text like the novel calls for minute reading and since it involves the reader mentally, and reading is generally done alone, it allows space/scope for digression. The normal duration of Hindi film is about two and a half hours. There is no time for digression or details. Whereas, the audience in the theatre watch the film collectively, you cannot pause or think. The reading experience is personal and quite distinct from the film viewing experience and each of them has its own distinct rhythm which a dedicated reader or a spectator may internalise for better appreciation of the respective text.

2.3.2 Rhythm and Cinema

Rhythm is defined as a measured beat or flow, especially of words, music, etc. In the context of the present study, rhythm in cinema is not restricted to music in cinema but also refers to the tempo of action and the pace of the narration.

For instance, in the original text *Pinjar,* Puro's initial attitude of resentment towards Rashid is gradually transformed into a new relationship of acceptance over a time period of about a decade. But in the film, the transition is brought about rather hastily, within about two years. Since, the film is an intense *tour-de-force,* it has to adjust to a shorter time-span as compared to the novel, which can gradually build up the narrative since the novel enjoys the advantage of time, and therefore, the intensity as well as subtlety of relationships could be brought out more authentically in the source text. In this context, Maithili Rao, a film scholar observes:

> Amrita Pritam's novel encompasses a time-frame that stretches over thirteen years – from 1935 to '48- for the traumatized relationship of Puro and Rashid (the main characters) to finally reach the plateau of equilibrium and acceptance. The filmmaker Chandraprakash Dwivedi compresses the carnage and visceral hatreds of Partition into two years, to fast forward the slow simmering of anger, the maturation of guilt and the depth of repentance, with the result that they operate at a superficial level. The process of transformation is lost because the pacing of the film lingers too long on building up the ambience and then has to hurry to tie up the many strands – where personal stories are entwined with the cataclysmic events taking place around them (2004, 115).

Indeed, it is a challenging task for the filmmaker to be able to recreate the complex relationship between Puro and Rashid through the visual medium. The soliloquy and internal turmoil of the victim (Puro) and her abductor (Rashid) cannot be depicted easily. But the filmmaker has been extremely faithful to the core of the theme and its message.

Depending upon the need for the compression of events or of time span or shift of focus, the pace and frame of a film varies. The film *Bhumika* creates a fast-paced rhythm when showing a dramatic transition in the life of Usha, the female protagonist. The filmmaker of *Bandit Queen* focuses on the main protagonist Phoolan Devi to such an extent that she appears larger than the film itself, occupying centre-stage of

the screen-space. Whereas, the biographer Mala Sen has added historical, socio-cultural, political data in the biography, shifting the reader's attention to various aspects of caste-based politics, the issues related to banditry and the conflicting stories about Phoolan Devi. This difference in the two approaches accounts for the different rhythms of the two texts.

2.4 Hindi films based on Literature

In case of Hindi films based on literature, one comes across a varied and often a contrasting scenario. For instance, several remakes of *Devdas,* which has been adapted from the original work of Saratchandra Chatterjee, prove the popularity of the theme. The iconic image of the "alcoholic, lovelorn loser" is so powerful and *fluid* that it can be re-invented several times. Although the novel *Devdas* was hugely popular, it was not a masterpiece. What factors prompt the filmmakers to attempt yet another re-make? Perhaps it is the kind of 'fluidity' in the original work. Or is it the compelling characterization of the main characters that prompts the filmmaker to churn out a masterpiece such as *Devdas* from a literary work rated as average?

The question of fidelity of the celluloid version to the original text is significant. The "betrayal" by the filmmaker hurts the sentiments of the readers and the author. For example, Munshi Premchand's disillusionment at the apparently casual attitude of a filmmaker and his so-called attempt to distort the original work is well-known. But the partnership between a writer and the film-maker can work very well as well.

As Anjum Rajabali has observed in the case of K.A.Abbas and the filmmaker Raj Kapoor, for the director, the film is a personal statement, and for a director-writer partnership to flourish the writer has to be able to mould himself to the director's

vision and fuel the director's cinematic drive (See *Encyclopaedia of Hindi Cinema*, 2003, 313).

But often, box-office concerns dominate film industry and instead of aesthetic and true to life adaptations, with an eye on profit, 'formula' films get created. This is the case with much Hindi Cinema churning out predictable stories and stereotyped characterization. Very often the *formula* works so fabulously at the box-office that script-writing seems unimportant, and gets constantly modified and the dialogues are written on the spot. Girish Karnad has described the formula culture conditioning the mind of the viewers to "six songs, two dances, three fights or whatever" (Ibid, 310).

"There's an inbreeding of ideas in Hindi cinema. You write what was written, you make what was made, you show what already has been shown" feels Javed Akhtar. Despite the attempts at making formula films; from 1991-2000, out of 1,146 Hindi films that were released, only 59 were hits, whereas 931 (81.23 per cent) bombed, unable to recover even their costs. Salim Khan, the script-writer opines, "The most serious malice that the film industry faces is script illiteracy" (Ibid).

Vijay Tendulkar, in his inimitable style and hard-hitting satire, exposes the Bombay filmmakers:

> A film is considered to be a director's baby and contribution of others, specifically the scriptwriter is almost incidental. The scriptwriter is generally considered to be of less importance to the film than the music director and the song writer. His name generally does not appear in the credits mentioned in the hoardings, advertisements and write-ups. He is treated as a very minor factor in the process of film-making…. He has to put on paper what the director has imagined or will imagine (visualize) in the course of the script sessions (Ibid, 319).

Tendulkar's thought-provoking but sardonic comments provide an insider's view of the apathy of the filmmakers towards good scripts. " A writer who wants to become a film scriptwriter must not have an ego; he must be on call on any part of the day and night…..He need not be original, logical or literary….After all who cares for originality?" (Ibid, 320).

2.4.1 Screenplays: a literary genre

Recently, there has been a strong demand for recognizing film scripting as a literary form by itself. Film scripts involve the art of story-telling in the visual language of cinema. The script is in words, but those words are supposed to have a graphic quality, a moving chain of visuals and a minimum use of well-worded, crisp dialogues.

In her interesting article entitled "The Rising Popularity of the Screenplay", Irena Akbar asks a pertinent question: Why would anyone want to read a movie, and not watch it? (2011, 20)

The answer is obvious. Some films have created a niche and have made an everlasting impression on the minds of the people. The number of people who want to read a screenplay is on the rise maybe because they would like to re-live the film-viewing experience or would like to collect screenplays of classics as memorabilia. For instance, the dialogues of classics like *Mother India, Mughal-e-Azam, Awara* and even of the recent film *Saat Khoon Maaf* have been widely sold.

The screenplay book, offers more than the dialogue or the screenplay. Interviews with directors and writers, the discussions that went into a piece of dialogue, as well as deleted scenes and lines make it a collector's item. The Screenplay is a text. Just as

the famous plays are read, the screenplays too, are read by many film-buffs. So also, the growing number of film institutes and film students makes the publishing and preserving screenplays all the more significant.

2.5 Transmutation and its techniques

To begin with let us understand the meaning of the key concept discussed in this Chapter i.e, "transmutation".

2.5.1 Transmutation as a concept

According to the Oxford dictionary, the term 'mutation' refers to change or alteration. The word 'trans' is used as a prefix which means across, through, beyond. Transmutation in the present context means the process of rendering a literary text imaginatively from one aesthetic medium to another. This applies to films based on or even inspired by literary works. Generally speaking, this process involves a shift from the 'verbal' to the 'audio-visual' medium.

Filmmakers use a wide range of cinematic devices such as flashbacks, dreams, songs, in order to trans-create written text into audio-visual experience. This needs to be focussed in order to understand the process of transmutation as well as to highlight the significance of these devices in the portrayal of female protagonists.

An amazing range of creative devices are both adopted and adapted by the filmmakers to re-tell a story (which may sometimes be leisurely spread over a life-time of three generations) condensed in a period of three hours.

Since this Chapter deals with the process of transmutation, it is gainful to discuss some of these devices, namely, flashbacks, songs or melody, dreams and fantasy,

imagery, mirror-images, motifs and their impact on the portrayal of women protagonists in the select Hindi Cinema.

2.5.2 Flashbacks

Flashback is a device that entails flashing images from the past memory of the relevant character, with visuals and sounds. It permits the filmmaker to 'play' with time and space, more so in case of films based on biographies and autobiographies, where pitting the past of the protagonist with the present is often necessary for effective re-rendering of a text.

'Flashback' is not a purely cinematic device, but has been a great favourite with the authors of literary works as well. For instance, in the source text of the film *Umrao Jan* Ada by Ruswa, Umrao narrates an episode wherein she is in Faizabad, and the place reminds her of her childhood. It was in the vicinity of her home. The place made her restless and uneasy. It was the same tamarind tree under which she would play with her brother. Umrao says:

> I wanted to rush inside…. But I held myself back because I knew the rustic folk shun courtesans and I would compromise the honour of my father and brother. Again I felt what a horrible predicament I was in with only a wall separating my mother from me - and I, aching to be with her. Was I to be denied even a glimpse of her? It seemed to be unspeakably cruel" (Ruswa, 1961, 105-106).

Flashbacks invite the audience deliberately to be a part of the mindscapes of the characters of a text or films. It helps to provide an intimate, personal account of an individual's experiences. It has been used imaginatively in the women-centric films under study to uncover the female subjectivity which is the focus of the present research.

In the past, for flashbacks, the directors used a wavy or watery effect to travel back in time along with a dialogue or a prominent image. In case of historical films, subtitles were used to indicate the year. To signify passage of time, the rotating hands of a clock or the flying pages of calendar have been the most commonly used images.

Flashbacks relate the conscious to the subconscious. Subconscious carries the memories of the past and the 'memories' makes the present meaningful, relevant, providing depth to the character's mindscape, her actions, decisions, drives and so on. It provides the audience with a perspective that enables them to understand the character's emotions and the underlying causes of her/his actions. It also helps to break the linear pattern of the narrative as well as to condense the story to a time-span of about two and a half hours. Through the use of flashbacks, it is possible to create a sense of nostalgia on screen by prompting the character to visit her/his past.

Gulzar admits to have found 'flashbacks' creatively useful to maintain the unity of place and time – one of the basic rules of drama, since it binds the narrative to a perspective and keeps the narration concise, particularly, if the story spans over a long duration. "Flashbacks can be used to dramatize a scene, as also to hold on to a secret or suspense, until the narrative calls for a dramatic revelation. It is essentially a tool of screenplay" (See *Encyclopaedia of Hindi Cinema*, 2003, 217).

It has been found to be particularly effective in the screenplays based on the lives of personalities, such as Hansa Wadkar, Umrao Jan Ada, Zubeida and so on. For an auto-narrative or a biopic, it is a suitable, almost a natural mode of story-telling. In its capacity for delving into the past, it creates for the unsuspecting reader/ viewer a disorderly but a gripping account that dispenses with facile linearity and expected growth of the plot, and thereby, it creates an interesting, complex story.

Flashback is a significant device that can be used in the present study for an effective analysis of the emerging female subjectivities. This can be done by linking the *image,* and *voice* of a woman protagonist with what has been recalled by way of the flashbacks. This technique helps the viewers to get an insight into the subconscious of the subject. It helps the critic to analyze *what* aspects of memory was revealed and *how* by the filmmaker. It helps to compare the director's choice vis-a-vis the author's. We are able to compare and contrast the utility of this device in the depiction of female protagonist in the text and films. Flashbacks are used to enhance the dramatic impact and help the audience to view the episodes in the film from the perspective of the female protagonist. This is especially useful in case of films based on biopic.

Thus flashback has been used as a handy device for the analysis of the female subjectivities of the films undertaken for this study.

2.5.2.1 'Flashback' technique in films under study

Mother India (1957) is a classic example of how flashback is used to 'bracket' the narrative. In its earlier version, *Aurat* (1940) also, a significant flashback was used in the last shot of the film wherein Radha recalls her memories of the past as she holds her dead son, Birju in her arms. The filmmaker made use of a cinematic technique known as 'montage' to create a series of visual images. This helped to create a sense of nostalgia. Interestingly, the original source text that inspired the film, *The Mother* by Pearl Buck uses flashbacks too. Subsequently, A. R. Kardar's *Dastaan,* Raj Kapoor's *Aag, Awara* and *Mera Naam Joker,* Bimal Roy's *Madhumati,* have followed this trend.

Interestingly, in *Mother India* the technique of 'flashbacks within a flashback' has also been used. For instance, the decision of Shamu to abandon his wife Radha is

prompted by humiliation at the hands of the village moneylender Sukhilala. To evoke the memory of humiliation, the filmmaker uses a flashback, which creates a very dramatic impact. Since the entire film is in the flashback mode, there are at least two instances of 'flashback within flashback'. A large span of time could thus be condensed or shortened by the use of this technique.

Very often, flashbacks also involve the use of *close-ups*, just before the beginning of the flashback. This helps the viewers to connect with the main protagonist. *Mother India* uses *extreme close-up* shots and so does the film *Chakra*. The minute details of facial expressions facilitated by a close-up shot is the most effective means of highlighting the feelings of the women protagonist who assume centre-stage of the screen-space and thereby their importance is fore-grounded. It also helps gauge their mental state.

The Film *Bhumika* (1976) based on the autobiography of well-known actor Hansa Wadkar is noted for its detailed design of the flashback. The story, set in the late 1970s, narrates the event of 1940s, 1950s and even 1960s wherein the details of the past decades are drawn up magnificently. This technique resourcefully reveals the evolution of Cinema in India. Black and white film footage has also been used to provide the authentic temporal feel of an era i.e., re-enacted on the celluloid. The narrative is presented in loosely connected fragments, so as to provide for greater scope for 'digression' and thereby to recreate protagonist Usha's struggle against patriarchal family structure as well as the largely male-dominated film-world.

Geeti Sen, underscoring the effective portrayal of 'reality', in this film observes:

> A self-reflexive film, Bhumika experiments with the technique of recurring flashbacks – a
> method that leads the viewer into alternating sensations of *real* images (in brilliant colour) and

dream images (in sepia). The changing paradigms between Usha's present and her past also

interface the growing tension between the demands of her public professional persona and the

fulfilment of her personal quest/desires. Since both aspects of her life are equally dramatized,

there begins to emerge a seamless shift between 'acting' in film and 'enacting' her life – until

towards the end she seems to be acting out her role as though she was permanently on stage

(2002, 12).

The flashback mode necessitates change in the form and structure of the film. It

creates a sense of nostalgia, melancholy and it provides the main protagonist Usha, an

opportunity to present a wide and complex range of her experiences. The film does

not have a linear pattern of narration; this technique of temporal shifts was

deliberately employed so that an entire life could be unfolded before the audience in a

film of about two and half hours.

The flashback mode helps to see the film from the perspective of the main character,

and the viewer is anchored to 'her life and struggles'. This also helps to bring to the

fore the psychological complexities of the character which facilitates greater interest

in the theme that is woven around the life of a celebrity. The use of black and white as

well as the sepia tones provides with a unique experience of sharing the childhood

memories of the protagonist -- a noted actor in real life too. The film uses music,

songs, radio (news broadcasted about the world war) and film-sets in order to recreate

the past.

This is a story of the *Nayika* (actress) and we have an interesting analogy provided by

none other than Satyajit Ray in his film *Nayak*. He too experimented with the

flashback mode of narration in his film *Nayak.* To quote Satyajit Ray:

Planning the story of *Nayak,* I dismissed quite early the notion of an orderly, step-by-step

account of the making of a matinee idol. That seemed to belong to the cinema of the thirties

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and forties. In the film, the hero's part is revealed in flashbacks and dreams which make inroads into a very tight time-space pattern (twenty-four hours in a train) (2006, 64-65).

In the film *Sujata* also*,* flashback is used in one of the scenes, wherein, Sujata recalls an event of her childhood when she had insisted that her birthday should be celebrated in the same manner as Rama's birthday. Sujata connects the past with the present and tries to understand the discrimination between Rama and herself. This flashback helps reinforce and bring alive the memory of 'discrimination' based on caste which is the main theme of the film.

In *Umrao Jaan*, the flashback is used on two occasions: (i) When Umrao Jaan meets her family after decades of separation and her younger brother refuses to accept her. He threatens to kill himself if she does not leave the house for he is ashamed of his sister Umrao, who has now become a famous courtesan. She recalls her childhood days wherein brother-sister would play pranks and were extremely fond of each other. The flashback is a reminder of how Umrao, a victim of patriarchal excesses is abandoned by her own family again because of patriarchal notions of reputation and shame. It helps create in the audience a sense of pathos, loss and anguish, and heightens the impact of the tragic moment.

The film also uses the episode of the chance meeting of Umrao with Ram Dei, the girl who was abducted and sold to a woman of the royal family. Ram Dei enjoys a life of dignity and she is fortunate to get the name, fame, wealth and love of Nawab Sultan, her husband. In contrast, Umrao who was rejected because of her dusky complexion was sold to Khanum Jan and becomes a courtesan. The flashback was used deliberately to highlight *this* contrast which changes the destiny of Umrao and Ram-Dei.

In the film *Chakra,* flashback is used effectively when Amma, the woman protagonist recalls her happy and serene past when she lived with her husband and her infant baby boy. The couple looked contented and blissful when the tragedy strikes. Her husband kills the contractor who tries to molest Amma. The couple abandons the hometown and flee to the city of Mumbai. The fear of police is deep-rooted in the memory of Amma as she recalls how her helpless husband was shot dead when he tried to steal a few tin sheets from a railway yard.

The original text too uses the same events in the form of flashbacks in order to explain Amma's paranoid behaviour at the mention of police. In the film she utters several times, *"Mere ko police ka jokhim nahi hona"* (I do not wish to invite any trouble or risk of the police). It helps to understand the story from the perspective of the female protagonist. The novel too begins with flashbacks.

In the film *Ek Chadar Maili Si,* the filmmaker uses the device a few times to enhance the impact of the following situations: (i) Rano recalls the happy as well as sad moments when her husband, Triloka was alive. This flashback is infused with a background song. (ii) When Rano and Mangal (her younger brother-in-law) are forced to marry, the same song is repeated and the flashback related to the relationship of *bhabhi-devar* (Rano and Mangal) is highlighted. The flashbacks strengthen the narrative and add to the impact of the scene. The irreconcilable dichotomy inherent in the scene is brought to the fore. (iii) During the fag-end of the film, the memory of a brief encounter with the youth who killed Triloka, (Rano's husband) is used. It adds to the dramatic impact of the scene when Rano remembers the young lad who had killed her husband in a state of frenzy and who is now transformed and repentant, requesting Rano to give her consent to marry her daughter with him. Without the flashback (used

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both in the text as well as in the film), the climax of the film would not have been so effectively achieved.

The filmmaker, Kalpana Lajmi uses flashbacks in her film *Rudaali* to revive/ bring alive the memories of Sanichari's sufferings. Sanichari narrates the events related to her life to her friend Bhikhni. Flashbacks are used to narrate events related to the sudden death of Sanichari's mother-in-law, the chance meeting of the young and beautiful Sanichari with Kunwar (the landlord), the death of Sanichari's husband.

The novel *Pinjar*, begins with a lengthy flashback. In the film, the sound flashback is also used on one occasion (when Puro recalls the words of Rashid, her abductor). Rashid warns her that her efforts to go back to her parents would be futile; for they will not accept their daughter who has been abducted. This is identical to the source text. In yet another episode, flashback reveals how Rashid is attracted towards Puro after he has had a chance encounter with her.

The film *Bandit Queen* also includes very brief flashbacks (like lightening flashes of memory) yet they create a tremendous appeal. They do not disturb the story and are well-synchronized with the narrative. The film begins with the flashback which introduces the main character Phoolan Devi (the adult woman, the dacoit, who speaks and swears bitterly) and the following scene shows an eleven year old child (Phoolan), bathing in the river with several children. The sharp binaries help to see the evolution of an innocent girl into the most dreaded Bandit Queen.

The *sound* flashback is used when Phoolan hits her husband Puttilal mercilessly. In this scene, the cry of the young Phoolan who had been abused by her elderly husband is juxtaposed effectively as she torments and hits him. Thus, the cause of Phoolan's anger and revenge towards the perpetrators of oppression is presented dramatically.

Similarly, at the end of the film, Phoolan, who is in a state of delirium hears the voices calling out to her, she recalls the river of her village and her childhood.

Thus, it can be seen, that flashbacks are employed creatively by both texts and the films. The audience is involved in sharing the experience of the female protagonists by travelling down the memory lane by using one of the oldest devices of story-telling, i.e. flashbacks. The perception and the vision of the director alter not only the story and its core theme but also the manner in which he or she chooses to narrate the story.

2.5.3 Songs as a device of transmutation

Indeed, music (songs) is an integral part of our lives and of course, of Cinema as well. Songs enjoys a place of distinction in the creative, aesthetic medium of cinema. Be it Classical, Western pop, Bhajans, Sufi music, Ghazals, or the rich heritage of folk-music with regional diversity, filmmakers and composers have made 'songs' an integral part of Hindi film culture.

Vanraj Bhatia, the music composer, makes a useful observation on the structure of Hindi Cinema and refers to its impact on the viewer across the board:

> To me our Hindi film is a unique formula, a structure that doesn't exist anywhere else in the world. It has its own set scheme that has perhaps developed from Sanskrit drama. In place of *padas* in Sanskrit plays, we have songs in Hindi films. So, the Hindi film is, in a way, a very traditional performance – or else it wouldn't have struck such deep roots. It affects everybody in India, irrespective of language, religion and social status (See *So Many Cinemas*, 1996, 156).

The role of songs as a device of transmutation has been significant. With the arrival of the talkies, songs became a mandatory part of the film. The filmmakers began to

create and use song-situations to suit every mood and emotion. Songs have been woven into situations with such craftsmanship that they have become a part of the narrative. They form the sub-text and break the monotony of narration. Songs are used to create situations such as celebration of an occasion or a festival or to introduce the main protagonist, as in the case of *Teesri Kasam*, wherein the film begins with the song *"Sajan re jhooth mat bolo"* which assists in the character-perception of the male protagonist, Heeraman.

Hindi songs make a lasting impression on the minds of the audience and have admirers all over the world. The music albums and radio broadcasting service have contributed immensely in popularizing Hindi film songs. Although the songs last longer than the films, their roots are firmly grounded into the themes of the film. They become a part of the narrative. The poetry and the rhythm of a lyric adds a new dimension to the film viewing experience. For instance, when we view the songs of *Teesri Kasam*, we come across the 'poetic' quality of its narrative.

Yves Thoraval notes aptly, " … for a lover of Opera like myself, Indian cinema seems to offer, because of the primordial place it gives to voice, music, dance and to theatricality, a logical visual extension of this passion" (See *Romancing The Song*, 2012, 40). There are scores of examples of Hindi Cinema and its connection with songs; its presentation style help justify the viewpoint of Thoraval.

According to Ashok Ranade, the well-known musicologist, 'the 'what is' of cinema needs to be supplemented by 'what might have been' and [M]usic and song can – and often do – take up this responsibility' (2006, 433-4).

2.5.3.1 Songs as a sub-text

In aesthetically revealing the 'unseen potential' of situation and character, songs from the selected women-centric films provide a useful insight into the psychological, sociological, aesthetic as well as literary aspects of the themes in general and characterization of the women protagonists in particular. At times, the songs lend *voice* to the *voiceless,* and sometimes, it is used as a means of protest against the injustice of society. But more often than not, it is used to express a given character's innermost feelings of love, despair, sorrow, happiness and so on. The analysis of the lyrics in the women-centric films could provide valuable insight into the socio-psychological aspects of issues such as men-women relationship, the status of women, notion of virtue or vice concerning women protagonist and soliloquy.

Unfortunately, although the music composers, playback singers receive a due recognition in the credits of the film, the role of the lyricist is undermined. It would be worthwhile to investigate into how songs and especially the lyricists have contributed to the subject 'women'? What do these songs convey about women protagonist and issues concerning them? How are the songs in the films selected for study used as a device of transmutation? Are the lyrics influenced by the source text? These are the major areas of investigation.

The discussion about songs used as a transmutation device will be done as per the *song-type* as it is possible to categorize the Hindi film songs and analyze them as device of transmutation.

Bidai Geet: In films like *Mother India*, *Umrao Jaan* and *Bandit Queen,* there is an inclusion of *bidai geet* which is sung during the marriage ceremony of the daughter to denote her separation from her parents, siblings and friends. The song creates a mood

of melancholy and saddens the hearts of the viewers. These songs are sung by womenfolk all over the country and it is deeply-rooted in the folk-culture of the rural India.

The *bidai* song of the film *Bandit Queen*, *"Choti si umar main kare mohe byasa"* too provides for a situation wherein the women of the little hamlet, *Gora Ka Poorva* in Chambal Valley, sing for the child-bride Phoolan whose life and destiny alters drastically after marriage.

The regional 'feel' is added to the composition and the presentation of the song. There is a powerful hint of accusation in the lyrics, *"choti si umar mein kare mohe byasa"* (You are marrying me off at such a tender age). It speaks about the plight of the child-bride. This song recurs again and again in the film and its overwhelming presence is felt at the end of the film when the subtitles are displayed. This marks its significance because it is not merely a *bidai geet* but a lingering memory of agony and injustice perpetuated by the patriarchal family norms. This is how it is used as a *leitmotif.*

Festival songs: Hindi films have hundreds of examples wherein the celebration of festivals is synthesized with dance and music. *Holi*, provides for a perfect situation where fun, frolic can be synthesized with music. In *Mother India*, the song, "Holi aai re" (lyrics written by Shakeel Badayuni and the music composed by Naushad) is reflective of the folk-tradition of *Raas-leela* and is synthesized innovatively with moods of various characters. It creates a dramatic situation and highlights the emotional tension, the conflict of interest and motives of various characters in the film. Vivid incidents/ moods are covered within this "one song", using the festival of "Holi" as the context/ background. The eloquent nature of folk- song and dance

during the festival of Holi provides for a distinct form of narration wherein many 'stories' are being told simultaneously. This unique advantage of multi-layered projection is possible to the medium of 'cinema', and that, largely through songs.

Songs, as a didactic device: According to Gayatri Chatterjee, the song, *"Duniya mein hum aaye ho to jeena hi padega"* (*Mother India*) is not a song but a "lecture" which is basically composed to preach the ethical-moral values required to be an ideal Indian woman. Gayatri Chatterjee describes the role of songs in cinema thus: "[a] true woman carries upon her the burden of shame of the entire world. Her modesty is her *dharma* [her rule of conducts, life's imperative]'. It ends with the un-gendered aspiration, 'Those who have lived with dignity will die with dignity, too' (2002, 52).

In an interview Naushad, the composer of the songs of *Mother India,* shared his views with Chatterjee about the content of the song. According to Naushad, "In both Hindu and Islamic traditions, songs are discursive or narrative – and not merely lyrical. They tell stories, discuss ethical and philosophical issues" (Ibid).

The song *'Sajan re jhooth mut bolo'* helps to introduce the main character Heeraman. Such songs help to convey the message propagated by seers and philosophers such as Sant Kabir, and is deeply ingrained in the Indian society.

Songs reflect passage of time: The song *"Umariya ghattati jaye re"* (*Mother India*) denotes the temporal aspect of life i.e., the passing of time. It is also used to highlight the inverse relationship between the growing size of the family and the declining fortunes of its members. The filmmaker cleverly uses the song situation to cover a span of about half a decade.

Very often this technique is used to show the growth of a child to adulthood and the song reflects the principle of continuity and unity. The songs act as a connecting element and provide a background for the 'nature of transition' vis-à-vis 'time'. For example, in the film *Umrao Jaan* a song is used as a device which connects two different time zones. This makes the use of songs an innovative transmutation technique.

Background Scores: A good film song may help the audiences to read deeper into the situation. There are a few examples of how the background song is used as a part of the narrative. It creates the mood required to describe situations such as mental turmoil, a disturbing or a joyous situation. It also expresses the feelings which cannot be described in prose, dialogues. For example, a song *"Samay dheere chalo"* in *Rudaali* is a background song which denotes the unchanging situation of poverty and sorrow in the life of Sanichari.

The background score enjoys an immense potential to transcend from the 'personal' to 'other', from 'one' to 'many', creating a mood of catharsis. This is more relevant in case of women-centric situations for it speaks for all the women as a 'category' or 'class'.

There is a background song in the film *Ek Chadar Maili Si "iss duniya mein aurat kya hai, do lafzon ki ek kahani".* The melancholy mood of the song is merged with the flashbacks, which consists of the glimpses of the days which Rano spent with her husband, Triloka. She is haunted by the memories of the past events. Background song in the film *Chakra*, *"Raat andheri, dhoom machi hai"* is combined with haunting images of the slum-dwellers, the manner in which they get drunk in order to mourn the death of an elderly man.

Songs used as a 'leitmotif': There are a few significant examples of how melody evokes memories, how they connect the present with the past and provide depth to an episode. In the case of *Bhumika,* the song *"Mundar bajo re"* is often repeated. Since the film is a biopic, the song is used symbolically to connect the present with the memories of the past. Of course, other techniques such as use of black and white film footage, flashbacks, create a combined impact. But the filmmaker uses the song not only to connect events but also to create empathy for the protagonist, Usha, who is lonely and disillusioned despite her illustrious career as an actor.

The song *"mera jhijkila balam na aaya"* depicts the female protagonist, Usha in her role as a film star and helps contrast with her loveless personal life. The filmmaker uses a number of song- situations which are being filmed, in order to present to the audience not only the evolution of the actor Usha but also the evolution of various genres of Hindi Cinema. Also, the songs of *Bhumika* symbolically represent the distinct styles of picturization that were used in the films of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s.

Similarly, the song *"Duniya banane-wale kya tere mann mein samai"* from *Teesri Kasam* is used as the leitmotif which takes the audience from the sensuous to the sublime, from the earthy to ethereal world, making them a 'participant' in the journey of Heerabai and Heeraman.

Synthesizing music with dreams/fantasy: A combination of songs (audio) and dreams/fantasy (visual) creates an amazing impact in cinema. For instance, in the film *Pinjar*, the song *"Haath chute bhi to"* is synthesized with the fantasy of Puro wherein she imagines herself to be the bride of her fiancée Ramchand.

Sanichari sings the song *"Dil hoom-hoom Kare"* to express her emotions of love and agony. Here too, a good blend of songs and fantasy is presented. The song *"Kare-kare gehre saye"* (rain song) from *Chakra* is used as a means to express the fears of Amma as well as her desire for a bonny baby and stability in her personal life.

To express Sujata's love towards Adhir, rain, clouds are used as motifs in the song, *"kali ghata chaye, mora jeeya tadpaye"*. Shanichari sings joyously, *"jhoothi-moothi mitva avan bole, bhadon bole kabhi sawan bole"*. 'Rain' seems to be the favourite motif used in songs to express the hidden emotions without inhibitions, especially in case of women protagonists.

2.5.3.2 Regional flavour

The Hindi film songs, especially based on or taken from a literary text have an added advantage; they provide an immense scope for the inclusion of regional flavour of folk-songs and folk-dances.

Whether it is *"Suno mere bandhu re"*, a boatman's song from the film *Sujata* (S.D. Burman composed and sang the song which reflects the regional flavour of Bengal) or *"Mera jhijkila balam na aaya"*, a lavani from *Bhumika* connected to the Marathi theatre-culture, the films based on literary texts provides immense possibilities and opportunities to bring the regional flavours into the mainstream Hindi cinema.

The women-centric cinema gives an added edge to the film viewing experience since the music, lyrics, the mood it creates is palpable and enriching. *"Suno mere bandhu re"* creates a perfect setting and mood for the young couple, Sujata and Adhir, to express their feelings of love without themselves speaking. The female protagonist

Sujata is a shy, introvert person and is unable to communicate her true feelings. The use of this song helps to convey her emotions.

Similarly, the songs of *Pinjar* and *Ek Chadar Maili Si* are embedded in the folk-dialect, folk-dance and folk-music of Punjab. *"Mar gayi, mar gayi"* from *Ek Chadar Maili Si* is based on *giddha* whereas the song in *Pinjar "Darda mahiya mahiya"* is a synthesis of *Bhangra* and *Kawwali*.

Almost all the songs of *Teesri Kasam* are based on the folk-songs. There is a song for every performance of Heerabai, the female protagonist and a song for every situation. In *"Paan khaye saiiyam hamaro"*, Heerabai sets the stage on fire by her dramatic entry and performance. Every song creates a distinct impact on the minds of the audience. Each song has a story to tell, an event to unfold. The song *"Aa, aa bhi ja, raat dhalne lagi, chand chupne chala"* represents the emotional turmoil faced by Heeraman and Heerabai. The lyricist Shailendra was a poet-lyricist of great calibre and the theme, content and the style of the film is moulded by its songs. In fact, the entire story of the film is conveyed through songs. Thus, *Teesri Kasam* which is based on the life of a *nautanki* performer and a *gadiwan* is unthinkable without songs.

2.5.3.3 Songs - A maker of images; 'real' as well as 'reel'

One person, deserving a mention in this context, is Raj Kapoor, who played the role of Heeraman in *Teesri Kasam*. His films have given the finest songs to the world. Madhav Maholkar comments on the excellent chemistry between the actor, Raj Kapoor and the lyricist Shailendra:

> The artist in Raj Kapoor and the poet in Shailendra complemented one another. What Shailendra wanted to say, he could express through the films of Raj Kapoor. Both wanted their feelings to sincerely reach the common man. One was the people's artist and the other the

people's poet…..A distinct image of Raj Kapoor was forged through these songs (see *So Many Cinemas*, 1996, 161).

But an interesting aspect of the music of the film *Teesri Kasam* is that the songs not only depict the emotions of the male protagonists but also provides a song for every situation connected to Heerabai, the woman protagonist. The song, *"Sajanva bairi ho gaye hamar"* depicts her sorrow, *"Laali Laali doliya main laali re dulhaniya"* is a song that makes the audience become part of Heerabai's momentary sojourn and share the joy of becoming "bride-like"; forgetting the dark truth that a *nautanki* performer cannot dream of a happy, secure life. The song creates the situation, enhances the impact of the theme and creates empathy.

The songs such as these last longer than the films. It strikes a chord which echoes in the hearts of the audience and becomes a part of their lives. The folk-dialect used by the author 'Renu' and the characterization style must have definitely helped the lyricist to write the soulful songs. Songs with intense emotions and message help to enhance the performance of the actor. Very often, the actors admit that it is the magic of melody that has helped them to get into the skin of the character they depict on the celluloid, effortlessly and convincingly.

2.5.3.4 Poetry and songs

The author Amrita Pritam, of the novel 'Pinjar' has included the following poetry/folk-song in the text: *Charkha jyon dahniya main, chappe jyon panniya main, Pidhiyan te wale mere khes ni. Putra nu ditte ucche mahal te madiya, Dhiyan nu ditta pardes ni* (When I weave cloth on the *charkha* and print designs, I make quilts that are used by generations. The sons are given palatial houses and highrise buildings but the daughters are married off and sent far away). The same song is modified to suit

the Hindi –speaking audience and is included as a *bidai* song, *"Charkha chalati ma, dhaga banati ma, bunanti hai resham ke taar ni"* (Mother turns the *charkha*, draws thread from it and weaves out of those silken threads).

In *Teesri Kasam,* at least four songs authored by Phanishwarnath Renu have been modified by the popular lyricists, Shailendra and Hasrat Jaipuri. The beginning sentences of the songs (mukhda) "Sajan re jhooth mat bolo", "Sajanva bairi ho gaye hamar"*,* "Lali-lali doliyan main" and "Teri baanki ada pe main hoon fida" is penned by the author Phanishwarnath Renu in the text and are well integrated in film situations. The songs are rooted in the folk-culture of rural, traditional society of the Northern parts of India. The language/ dialect of the rural folks, their traditions, customs and philosophy of life are reflected in the songs.

As such, songs are an integral part of cinema. The women-centric cinema has provided immense opportunities to the creative minds to pen words, provide melodious music and create literary masterpieces (in terms of lyrics, poetry). A treasure trove of memorable songs provides a rich insight into the themes related to women. Hindi film songs have indeed carved a niche globally.

What do the lyrics that are used in the select films convey to the audience? It is generally to arouse feelings of care, concern or empathy for the women protagonist. Some songs express the feelings of love and romance. There are a few songs depicting soliloquy. This is an important evidence of their self-reflective nature, their loneliness and sufferings. Interestingly, all the lyricists who voiced women's feelings were male. Thus, Hindi film songs could be a subject of critical analysis with respect to the status of women and the depiction of various facets of their lives.

2.6 Dreams, fantasy, imagery and motifs

Dreams are vehicles of desires. They bring to the surface the suppressed emotions, urges and a complex maze of human relationships. The surreal images could be haunting and could make a tremendous impact on the viewers. Dreams and fantasies are used effectively to reveal the hidden emotions of the main characters, i.e. the women protagonists.

According to Sigmund Freud, *dream* is a disguised fulfilment of a repressed wish. He considers dreams and fantasies 'as a tool to understand human mind and its psychological complexities'. The interpretation of dreams has as its object the removal of the disguise to which the dreamer's thoughts have been subjected. It is moreover, a highly valuable aid to psycho-analytic technique for it constitutes the most convenient method of obtaining insight into unconscious psychical life.

Oxford dictionary defines *fantasy* as image inventing faculty especially creating extravagant or visionary mental image. It is also associated with day-dreaming.

In literature, 'fantasy' is defined as 'fiction that contains impossible situations, events or characters. Fantasy includes fables, fairy tales, ghost stories, and science fiction' (See *Projection in Literature*, 1967, 522).

Imagery is defined as 'Concrete words or details that appeal to the senses. Words that cause a scene to flash before the reader's eye' (Ibid, 525).

The above mentioned definitions can be applied to the realm of cinema; except that the medium changes from words to audio-visual.

Freud's works which include *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) have been of enormous influence in the 20th Century. Freudian theories can be used to provide valuable insights into the use of dreams/fantasies in films and their literary source.

Films being a powerful visual medium allows for the presentation of the dreams and fantasies most creatively and vividly. Since women are mostly subjected to unequal power equations and live in repressive patriarchal societies, their dreams and fantasies (as projected in the text and films based on the text) could provide useful insights into their suppressed desires and emotions. The discussion tries to explore whether dreams /fantasies used in the text are transmuted on the celluloid or are they created/invented for the film for its cinematic appeal? A few examples from the selected work are cited below to elucidate the use of fantasy as a device and its inclusion or exclusion in a text.

Fantasies can be used to make the emotional connect between the past and the present as well as to rekindle the suppressed desires. Sometimes, the filmmaker may use verbal imagery of the source text (in the form of verbatim dialogue) for its literary quality. For instance, in the literary text *Sujata*, Adhir, indeed is quite impatient by nature and speaks of his love for Sujata very spontaneously. In the film, Adhir tells Sujata about his dream, *"Tum champai rang ki sari pehenkar, mathe par laal bindiya lagakar, chandmallika ka phool balon mein sajakar, mere paas khadi ho"*. This dialogue is influenced by the source text and the filmmaker has used it for its literary and aesthetic appeal.

In the film *Umrao Jaan,* Ameeran (later renamed Umrao) dreams that her abductor Dilawar Khan wants to attack her with a sword. She is frightened. There is a pigeon in her hand. The terrified bird tries to fly but gets wounded by Dilawar's sword. The

director has used the dream to project the fears of Ameeran and the scar of her abduction. This situation/scene is not mentioned in the source text, but it is invented in the film. Filmmaker *creates* convenient and effective means such as "dreams" to construct impressive visual images. It also helps to dramatize the situation and bring to the surface the hidden feelings of the women protagonist through the language of symbols.

Conversely, sometimes a film may omit a fantasy from the source text for aesthetic or commercial reasons. For instance, the original novel, *Ek Chadar Maili Si* provides significant instances of fantasy. Triloka fantasizes about the teenage girl (the pilgrim in the dharmashala) when he is with his wife Rano, visualizing himself as Chaudhari Meherbaan Das (the lecherous owner of the inn) and his wife Rano, as the "pilgrim" girl.

The above-mentioned fantasy is omitted in the film because of the limitation of the cinematic medium; for such a complex emotion or thought cannot be easily transmuted. Moreover, it would make Triloka appear like a villain. The audiences who are habitual to viewing polarized characters in black and white do not accept the grey shades of personality (which are closer to realistic depiction). Therefore, perhaps, the above mentioned fantasy used in the text is omitted in the film.

In another significant scene in the same film, Rano fantasizes that due to acute poverty she is selling her daughter to Chaudhari Meherbaan Das in order to earn a handsome amount. Chaudhari Meherbaan is notorious and is in the jail for committing a heinous crime of rape and murder of a teenage girl as a result of which the victim's brother accidentally kills Triloka. In the original work too, Rano fantasizes these events. Undoubtedly, it is vivid and impactful expression of the author Rajender

Singh Bedi that prompts the filmmaker to translate the words into audio-visual language.

In *Ek Chadar Maili Si*, fantasy is used by the filmmaker to reveal Rano's psychological trauma. Rano is a victim of abject poverty and the lower status accorded to her because she is a widow. She suffers humiliation and is taunted, abused and blamed for all the tragedies by her mother-in-law.

The film *Rudaali* includes dreams and fantasies woven in the theme. Sanichari's love for Kunwar, the landlord, is unexpressed because she is a married woman and of a lower socio-economic status. The caste factor, too, contributes to her decision to distance herself from Kunwar. The songs such as *Dil hoom hoom kare* provide a romantic setting for fantasies. Fantasies become a vehicle to fulfil the desires (whether of the woman protagonist or the audience or both). In the film, one of the significant symbolic projection of the gulf that exist between the upper caste and the lower caste (as well as high and low class) is denoted in the dream sequence of the song *"Dil hoom hoom kare",* when Sanichari attempts to touch the shadow of Kunwar, the shadow moves further away from her.

The inclusion of dreams/fantasy ultimately reveals the escapist tendency of the audience that has been nurtured by the filmmakers over a long period of time. Films generally synthesize music, songs, dreams /fantasy creatively and make it visually appealing by adding colourful costumes, beautiful locales and sets.

Amrita Pritam, in her novel *Pinjar* creates vivid imageries rich in style and substance and unique to the author's creative potential. It must have undoubtedly posed a great challenge to the filmmaker for most of the verbal imageries have not been translated into visual presentation in the film.

During the harvest season, Puro watches a happy and a lively environment in the *mela* of *Baisakhi.* People dance *bhangra* and sing praises for the young and the beautiful girls. As Puro watches groups of boys and girls, she thought to herself, *"yadi sab jawan ladkiyon ko yeh ladke apni -apni ghodiyon par uthakar bhag jayen, phir kya ho?"* (Pritam, 2003, 29). She is traumatized by her past experience of abduction and the fantasy reflects her fears. This thought, in particular cannot be re-presented on the celluloid, for it will go against the cinematic character portrayal of Puro, the female protagonist.

The text describes an event wherein Puro is required to visit Rattowal (the village where her fiancé Ramchand lived). Puro's fate brings her back to the village of her dreams. While travelling, she falls asleep in the *tonga*. She dreams that she is decked up for her wedding. The journey to Rattowal actually becomes a journey into her unfulfilled dreams and desires. This fantasy is synthesized with a background song.

Most imageries and fantasies created by the author are too vague and abstract to be transmuted into the visual symbols. The mind creates vivid images and mindscapes but the filmmaker cannot re-create all of them into visual images. For instance, When Puro comes face-to-face with Ramchand, she remains motionless. Unable to utter a word, she imagines, *"[v]eh khadi ki khadi anar ka paed bankar ug aai thi, jinke laal anaron ko jab koi todne lagta, weh angare bankar dharti par gir padte… anar ke paed mein se ek awaj sunai deti….mein boota uggi hoi yan mein be-muradi moi yan"* (Ibid, 72).

These imageries and poetic expressions by the author are influenced by the folk-tales and folk-songs of Punjab. Thus, the verbal imagery penned by Amrita Pritam allows for a greater intellectual as well as emotional involvement of the reader allowing for a

better scope for her/his own imagination to create mental images; whereas, the film maker is unable to translate the abstract idea into a concrete form. Amrita Pritam's literary work is extremely sensitive, intense and has the poetic quality which is very difficult to adapt and does not allow for an easy transmutation. But the filmmaker re-creates and synthesizes vivid cinematic devices which creates a different impact altogether. The 'reading' experience and the 'film viewing' experience are therefore very different. It raises the inescapable question whether literature and cinema are truly 'compatible'?

The story *Mare Gaye Gulpham arthaat Teesri Kasam* authored by Phanishwarnath Renu is an allegory. The spontaneous flow of the folk-dialect and the fast-paced narration style of Heeraman, the male protagonist sustain the interest of the readers. Heeraman narrates a folk-tale about a young, beautiful lady Mahua and her sufferings, to Heerabai; which paradoxically becomes their own story. The narration which uses the folk dialect, folk-songs and folk- tales provide the filmmaker with immense scope for the innovative use of metaphors and imageries.

The dialogues, the dialect used in this film have been influenced by the original text. The dialogue-writer is Phanishwarnath Renu, the author himself; and therefore, the original flavour of the language is retained. The unique expressions of the author is used judiciously by the filmmaker, such as *"Aurat hai ya champa ka phool?"* Such poetic phrases and expressions add to the lyrical quality of the film. However, these expressions can only be 'verbal' and not 'visual'.

2.6.1 Mirror images: what do they tell?

Mirror-images have always fascinated the human eye. Paradoxically, though they depict reality, these images seem mysterious. The filmmakers make creative use of

mirror-images in order to reflect not only what is *seen* but more than what *eyes can see*. They reveal the layers of inner self and lay bare many hidden aspects of a character. Mirror-images are used very creatively and vividly in the films since the era of Silent Cinema. In several films, the mirror-image is used to depict human emotions and for its aesthetic and emotional appeal.

For instance, the mirror images in the film *Bhumika*, have been used to reflect the women protagonist's transition/change from *reel life* into *real life*. When Usha, the woman protagonist changes her costume in front of the mirror; the mirror images captures the transition of the persona; adding a new episode to the unending turbulence of her life.

Each time, she enters into a relationship with a new man, a mirror image is used in order to capture her emotions. The mirror image creates a feel of objectivity, i.e. the subject is seen objectively, perhaps dispassionately, for the mirror tells the truth without any subjective bias.

When Usha marries Keshav, she is happy and full of hope and enthusiasm about their future. The mirror reflection reveals her joy. When she comes back home from the studio, her husband accuses her of extramarital affairs and there are moments of anger, frustration which is reflected by a mirror. The change of costume denotes a change of her *role*. The reflection of the *change,* used as a *leitmotif*, symbolizes the dichotomy, the unexpected transitions and the conflicts that exist in her life.

Geeti Sen, makes an interesting observation of the mirror-images of *Bhumika* as against those of *Sahab Biwi aur Ghulam*:

> The symbolic significance of dressing before the mirror is entirely different from the poignant sequence in *Sahib Bibi aur Ghulam* where Chhoti Bahu adorns herself as a beautiful woman,

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like the *nayikas* in classical poetry and painting: to await and *entice* her husband/lover. Here the purpose is not to dress up or adorn herself. Usha's transformation is done with calculated purpose: to rebel and invariably effect *change* in life (Sen, 2002, 122).

In one of the scenes, Usha and Naveen (a filmmaker) enter into a pact of committing suicide together. Usha consumes the tablets and while doing so watches her own reflection in the mirror. Geeti Sen notes, "The mirror signifies the tortured *double* image, of the private self and the public 'image' (Ibid, 123).

When Usha decides to settle with Mr. Kale – a landlord and a businessman; she is pleased to get a very special gift from him; i.e, a jewel box. She looks at herself in the mirror of the jewel box. The mirror image reflects a much more mature-looking woman (as compared to the newly wed Usha at the age of 17-18) who hopes to start her life afresh.

The mirror seems to be a *witness* to the moments of hope and despair, probably, an indicator of her loneliness; a reminder of the predicament of a successful actor but a deeply dejected person.

In *Chakra*, mirror image is used during a scene when Looka, the notorious *dada* and a prostitute are dressing-up after an intimate encounter. The mirror image is cleverly used to reveal crude aspects of human lives which are considered as a taboo. Perhaps, the mirror reflection is used as a *censor*. In another important scene, Amma, the woman protagonist looks at her reflection in the mirror as she decks herself for the truck-driver who is her lover.

In *Pinjar,* the filmmaker uses mirror images in combination with other popular devices such as songs and fantasy. When Puro reaches the village where Ramchand

(her fiancée whom she could not marry due to her abduction) lives, she becomes restless and nostalgic. She watches her reflection in the mirror.

In *Umrao Jaan*, the young and beautiful female protagonist, Umrao, loves to admire her own reflection in the mirror. In the original text, Umrao confesses, "I grew to adolescence and began to indulge in adolescent pastimes. At fourteen, I learnt to gaze at myself in the mirror" (Ruswa, 1982, 29). Confused about the fact that she got less attention from men in comparison to other courtesans in Khanum Jaan's establishment, she would wonder, ''What is wrong with me that no one pays me any attention?'' (1982, 30). However, in the film, the woman protagonist admired herself and appeared very confident about her looks.

Mirror-images were also used in the film to reflect the luxurious lifestyles of the courtesans and their passions for fineries and ornaments. The mirror images capture the moments of youth, beauty and affluence. The text deals with these aspects in the detailed descriptions provided by Umrao Jan, but the filmmaker converts them into 'visual snap-shots'.

The last scene in the film shows that Umrao Jan has returned to Khanum Jan's *Haveli* after witnessing a series of tragic events of 1857 which had left deep scars in her heart. She watches the haunted, gloomy look of the hall where once laughter and music echoed. She wipes the dust off a large mirror and watches her reflection. The image freezes, and the film ends with this significant shot. The *dust* on the mirror screen and her image symbolizes that 'time' spares none and all the vanity, beauty and affluence ultimately perishes. Perhaps, the gloom and the loneliness of the last days in the life of a courtesan are symbolically represented by the mirror image.

In the film *Teesri Kasam,* the filmmaker uses mirror image very meaningfully. Heeraman sings with his group of friends, "Chalat musafir, moh liya re pinjare wali muniya" (the bird in the cage has enchanted the traveller). The camera moves to the bullock-cart where Heerabai, a professional stage performer gazes at her mirror-image engagingly, almost with the narcissist pleasure. She feels as though she is an enchantress, who could charm Heeraman, a simpleton, a naïve bullock-cart driver. He will be trapped by the "pinjare-wali muniya" (a caged bird; though trapped by her own destiny, she could attract any men). It seems to be a forewarning, a prophecy.

In *Rudaali*, in one of the scenes, the images of Kunwar, his wife and Sanichari are deliberately captured in one mirror image, so as to indicate the possibility of a bond between Kunwar and Sanichari. Eventually, Sanichari declines the offer of becoming Kunwar's mistress.

2.6.2 Motifs

The Webster's new dictionary defines *Motif* as concept, design, device, idea, subject, theme. In the study of motifs, the semiotic approach to the study of cinema provides useful insights. Semiotics will help to understand the film from various perspectives, wherein different meanings and interpretation of the audio-visual images is possible. *Semiotics /Semiology* is defined as the study of signs and has in fact become the study of codes; a system that enables human beings to perceive certain events and entities as signs, bearing meaning.

The filmmaker of *Bandit Queen*, uses the *river* and its relationship with the different phases of Phoolan Devi's life symbolically. Deepanjana Danda in her study titled *Bandit Queen A Semiotic Approach* identifies five major plots which are based on the

five crucial incidents in the life of Phoolan devi. In each of the plots, 'river' and 'boat' is used to denote significant aspect of the plots (See Deep Focus, 1997, 35-40).

In *Bhumika,* the aspect of Usha's rebelliousness, her free-spirited nature is highlighted by creative use of audio-visual symbols, i.e. the motifs as well as the leitmotifs. Shyam Benegal makes use of the leitmotif of "running away" to depict the most interesting aspect of Usha's personality; her 'craving for liberation' from the oppressive patriarchal milieu.

The filmmaker makes use of "crossing the threshold" by the protagonist Usha as a repetitive behavioural pattern/response. She is rebellious and speaks her mind irrespective of the consequences. As a child, she runs away from her mother trying to hide from her, later, she runs away from Keshav, a young neighbour who nags her to accept his marriage proposal. Later in life, she runs away from home in defiance against Keshav, her oppressive husband, then runs away from Kale, the landlord, with whom she lived (as though in captivity). Her response to a stressful situation is to 'escape'. Flashbacks about the memories of the past are interwoven at times with the leitmotif of *running away.*

The filmmaker has cleverly used *Interior/Exterior space* to highlight the binaries and contrasts that exists in the complex characterization of Usha. The truthfulness of Hansa Wadkar's biography inspired the filmmaker to include vague, ambiguous shades of her persona. This created multi-dimensional rather than the clichéd, predicable personality. The inherent contrast and conflict is well-highlighted by using the *Interior/Exterior* space. For instance, when she leaves her family and her profession to fulfil her dream of leading a settled life with Mr. Kale; the *exterior* space is used very dramatically. Usha *runs away* from the glamorous tinsel town with

Kale to an unknown destination in search of her imagined freedom. Therefore the *interior/exterior* space becomes a motif or a symbolic representation of the dichotomy of her life.

The *interiors* of the hotel-room, the creaking sound of the fan, the narrow staircase leading to her home, the spiral staircase of the hospital wherein Usha staggers, heartbroken after a forced abortion, speak about the unsympathetic, unfriendly environs of her personal life. This is in contrast to the open space of the outdoors.

The filmmaker, Shyam Benegal has the rare ability to convert even the most insignificant object in the environment into a meaningful language filled with symbolism. This is one of the major advantages of the film medium wherein different filmmakers explore and use various ways of 'telling' and 'showing'.

Govind Nihlani, the ace cinematographer, has deliberately used wide-angled lenses to capture Kale's palatial *haveli* vis-à-vis Usha's identity; (Usha's presence in the large haveli seems insignificant due to Kale's domination). The growing sense of loss, alienation experienced by Usha, when she begins to live with Kale; her loss of identity, is brought to the surface by the use of 'space'. It is not *her being* but the *lack* of it which is brought to the fore.

2.7 Time/Period:

One of the indicators used in *Bhumika* is the news bulletin. It reveals the *time- frame* within which the major events that occur in the life of the author are encapsulated. Since the text *Sangte Aika* is a biopic, reference to the time-period was absolutely essential. Many important techniques such as the film titles, black and white film footage are used to denote 'period'. Shyam Benegal cleverly uses *film titles* in the film

Bhumika, as an indicator of the genres of films that emerged during the era. Film titles such as *Agni Pariksha, Mera Munna, Badnaseeb, Hamala, Khandan, Ma* were highlighted. The filmmaker provides glimpses of significant aspects of the evolution of Indian cinema as well as the evolution of Usha, the actress; blending the personal with the universal.

The film *Mother India* uses the song-motif *juhuriya katti jaye re* to show the passage of time vis-à-vis the transition in the fortunes of Shamu's family (the size of Radha's family increases and ironically, their fortunes decreases).

In the film *Bandit Queen*, Shekhar Kapoor uses text-cards to denote time and space. This authenticates the chronology of events and is also convenient to use.

Sometimes, the action remains static, unchanged; but the performer/actor undergoes a drastic change with respect to their age and appearance. An example of the film *Umrao Jan* could be cited. A background song and a dance are used to denote the elements of 'continuity and change', her growth from childhood to adulthood.

2.8 Nature – a storehouse of symbols:

The filmmaker Bimal Roy uses aspects of nature to depict the feelings of Sujata. Nature provides with multitudes of symbolic codes which are subtle yet easily communicable and could be understood by all. Nature and its hundreds of manifestations become an extension of the human self, especially if the protagonist is a woman. Elements of nature are therefore used universally, in almost all the spheres of aesthetic expressions. Indeed, nature provides an 'open sesame of metaphors' for the filmmakers as well as for the film scholars who wish to take up 'semiotics" as their subject of study and research.

The film *Sujata* begins with the scene wherein a cloth-liner full of baby dresses is swaying in the breeze. Here the breeze is used to signify *change* in the life of Upen and Charu (the foster parents of Sujata). The fluttering of baby clothes on the liner creates a joyous feeling.

The filmmaker uses the fury of nature; the storm, lightening, thunder and the heavy downpour of rain to convey Sujata's inner turmoil. The audio-visual impact of the scene heightens the dramatic impact and makes an everlasting impression on the minds of the audience.

When Adhir praises Sujata, her emotions are cleverly depicted by the 'touch-me-not' plant, aptly called in Hindi as *Lajwanti* (the shy one) and the manner in which the tender leaves shrivels, when touched.

The most memorable of the romantic scenes is filmed at the *river-ghat*. Sujata is all alone watching the ripples of the river, listening to the soft sounds of the waves; when Adhir arrives to meet her. It is the vast expanse of river, the sky and the solitude that magnifies the emotion of love and romance. It is the serenity of the *river-ghat* which provides an appropriate background for Adhir, to speak his mind and convince Sujata that he does not believe in the evil system of untouchability.

The rivers are revered by the Indians and river-ghats are pilgrim centres. It is nature's expanse that builds the harmony and adds depth to the words uttered by Adhir. How well the director could merge the personal dilemma of individuals with the social as well as the spiritual dimensions of equality, justice and human dignity!

The popular motif of 'Mother Earth' is used in *Mother India* wherein Radha personifies *Mother Earth*. She represents her unbreakable bond with earth in so many

ways that she should have been ideally named "Sita", the daughter of Earth. In one of the notable scenes in the film she stops the exodus of the villagers single-handedly. The filmmaker tries to convey a sense of love and devotion towards *matrubhoomi* in the scene depicting exodus of villagers and highlights Radha's efforts to stop them for abandoning their land. These aspects of the theme not only promote idea of nationalism, patriotism but also the reverence for *matrubhoomi.* There is a strong message for the audience i.e., not to forsake their land/ village even in the worst crises. "The scene also is a reminder of the worst exodus faced in the history of mankind, i.e. the partition of India and Pakistan" (Chhaterjee, 2002, 58). This incident however, was not a part of the original film *Aurat.*

Radha toils day and night in the fields (with her husband and later with her sons). In one of the significant scenes, Radha's body is totally smeared with water and earth during floods. Thus, she comes to symbolize *Mother Earth.*

In *Mother India*, a pair of *Kangans* (bangles) is used as a motif. This motif could be interpreted in many ways. It is a recurring motif, a *leitmotif* used effectively by the filmmaker. It is a symbol of *saubhagya* (marital status) when Shamu, the young bridegroom puts the gold *kangans* in the wrist of her young bride. It becomes very special *gift* for Radha, the young bride. The same, *Kangans* become a symbol of *honour* when Shamu refuses to take them to be sold to Sukhilala for the repayment of debt. It symbolizes the *dignity* of woman of the house. In the times of poverty and crises when Radha throws away the prized *Kangans* on the face of Sukhi-lala, it becomes a symbol of *sacrifice*. Eventually, it becomes an *object of conflict*, an obsession which Radha's son, Birju cannot give up till his last breadth.

Thus the repeated use of objects, events, landscapes could be used to denote significant meanings.

2.9 Conclusion

The study reveals that a few films have surpassed the original texts in terms of content and presentation style. For instance, *Teesri Kasam* far exceeds its source text; providing a wider 'space' or scope for the female protagonists. The process of transmutation leads to the recurring debate on the issue of fidelity. It is discovered that while the filmmaker of *Sujata* has been very faithful to the original text, the filmmaker Kalpana Lajmi has brought about a major shift in the focus of the text by way of inclusion of romantic angle between the feudal lord and Sanichari, the female protagonist.

It was discovered that the rhythm of the film is very different from the rhythm of the text mainly because of the alteration of the 'time-span' and the use of elements such as songs, dance (as in case of Pinjar).

It was also evident that the intellectual issue is brushed aside in favour of creating melodrama for the box-office purpose. The selected films reveal that various cinematic devices have been effectively synthesized and that films can transmit several ideas, emotions simultaneously and vividly. Adaptations of biographies have provided ample scope for the filmmaker to use flashbacks, imageries, dreams and fantasies. These devices provide *voice* to the *voiceless* and thus were found to be useful devices in the study of female subjectivities.

Songs were found to be very impactful since they are used as sub-text and were effectively used as a part of narration. The unspoken feelings were thus expressed

through the medium of songs. Songs were also used as leitmotif to create a feeling of nostalgia, melancholy as in case of films like *Umrao Jan*, *Bhumika, Teesri Kasam* and *Rudaali*.

Mirror-images were used creatively in films like *Bhumika, Umrao Jan, Pinjar* and others. The vivid images revealed impactfully the hidden aspirations, desires, dreams of the female protagonist and brought to the fore the psychological ambiguities of the female protagonists.

So also, the study of motifs related to nature (rain, breeze, river) and the leitmotifs such as "running away" (used in *Bhumika)* add to the richness and distinctness of cinematic language. Thus, we can conclude that filmmakers have synthesized several cinematic devices aesthetically to highlight the thoughts and emotions of the female protagonists in the adapted works. The source texts have definitely provided several inputs and ideas to the filmmakers. Wherever, the filmmakers have faced challenges in transmuting words into audio-visuals, they have creatively synthesized a number of cinematic devices in order to enhance the portrayal of women protagonists.

CHAPTER THREE

Emergent Female Subjectivities in Hindi Cinema

3.1 Introduction:

Hindi cinema has created much interest in the need for quality representation of women on celluloid. More importantly, it has also raised many crucial issues relevant to women and of concern to the pro-woman social segment. On this backdrop, the present study seeks to analyze the emerging female subjectivities in post-independence Hindi cinema. Hence, it is essential to define two key terms central to this analysis.

Subject and Subjectivity: According to the Oxford Dictionary, 'subject' is defined as 'theme of discussion, description or representation; (+ *for*) person, circumstance etc. giving rise to specified feeling, action, etc. In the realm of Philosophy, it is defined as thinking or feeling entity, a conscious self. As such, 'subjectivity' would mean the state of being a subject in the former senses, and the quality or the condition of being a conscious self in the latter sense. Seen from such a perspective, generally 'woman as the subject' is conspicuous by her absence in the mainstream Hindi cinema.

However, a few filmmakers have chosen women-centric themes to bring the predicament as well as the subjectivity of the female into deserved focus. However, it is a complex and a dynamic concept, interrelated to power structures and gender equations in society.

A brief glance at the term 'gender' would be useful here.

According to Ramazanoglu and Holland the term *Gender*, "can cover both how specific people experience sexuality and reproduction, masculinity and femininity, and the boundaries and interstices between them, and also variable cultural categories for conceptualizing what is lived and thought" (2002, 4).

They also point out that, "sexuality, reproduction, subjectivity and gender can be taken to be interrelated – not wholly independent of embodiment, but also socially and politically constituted" (Ibid).

In other words, while subjectivity is located in the individual, it is influenced by gender, conditioned by gender relationships and like the former is socially and politically constituted. Women, being at the receiving end of gender equation, the 'female subjectivity' is more susceptible to suppression and marginalization.

Little wonder than that, female subjectivity is at the core of feminism, which broadly represent the advocacy of women's rights; and more specifically, the theories of male dominance that view gender relations as political, and feminist struggle as a political activity on behalf of women.

The heterogeneity of the subjects in the sense of being the theme of representation chosen for the present study helps understand the changing dynamics of female subjects as thinking or feeling entity, and their relationship with self and others. This connotes the complex maze of interrelationship between the female subject and her perception of identity, autonomy and power.

In other words, the intricate relationship between lived reality and the experience of the female subject on the one hand, and power and its gender-based hierarchy on the

other hand can be gauged effectively in the portrayal of the female protagonist on the celluloid since it is an impactful audio-visual medium.

Thus, there is considerable scope for discussing the emergence of female subjectivities in Hindi cinema with the help of films under study. These films dealing with women-centric issues such as abduction, rape, molestation, gender-based discrimination provide valuable evidence of social history and offer a valid basis to gauge the nature of women's oppression, empowerment and the emergence of female subjectivities.

To obtain an adequate perception of female subjectivity, this study has made use of some established theories related to women.

Hence, a brief overview of the modern and post-modern theories under the rubric of 'feminism' with its focus on 'female subjectivity' is desirable.

3.2 Feminist Theories vis-à-vis Female Subjectivity:

Beginning with the struggle for equality between sexes pioneered by Mary Astell (1668-1731) to Mary Wollstonecraft's (1759-1797) view that "gender" is cultural construct and that social mores, patriarchal values and inaccessibility to education hinder women's equality and progress, feminism has come a long way.

However, in the 19th century, despite the emergence of new thinking propounded by the likes of August Comte, Herbert Spencer, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim, the female subject continued to remain in the periphery of the grand theories and ideas proposed by the scholars. It was not as if feminist concerns were completely overlooked but they were certainly subsumed under the rubric of the dominant

theoretic positions prevalent in that age. But gradually, several branches of feminist theories have burgeoned.

Sociology has also evolved distinct perceptions about 'gender'. While Sociology of Gender seeks to study socially constructed male and female roles, relations and identities, feminist theories seek to present woman-centric patterning of human experience. While Liberal Feminists have proposed theories focused on gender inequalities, radical feminists are mainly concerned about gender oppression.

In the 20th century, the Marxian theory of Capitalism and Freudian theory of psychoanalysis were mainly adapted by the feminist scholars to understand, analyze and re-interpret the causes of gender difference, gender inequality, and gender oppression. This led to significant theorization about 'gendered' nature of Maleness and Femaleness.

The well known feminist, Simone de Beauvoir, in "The Second Sex" expresses her views about 'woman as subjects'. Her focus on Subjectivity as the locus of freedom is significant. Her famous statement "One is not born a woman, one becomes one" could be understood and applied in every era with multiple interpretations.

Simone de Beauvoir felt that the lived experiences of women and sharing of the detailed account of their experiences becomes a useful evidence of how the socio-economic conditions and socialization processes coerces and entices women to assume and perpetuate 'femininity' – a state of secondary status vis-à-vis the male. Beauvoir offers no one fundamental cause for woman's universal otherness, though she examines several monocausal explanations, including biological differences.

Since the present study deals with female protagonists and women-centric issues, it will be gainful to indicate how the contemporary feminist theory can contribute to it. Encompassing a wide ranging system of ideas, feminist theory brings gender issues and woman-centric perspectives to the fore. According to George Ritzer, it is women centred in three ways:

1. Its "object" for investigation is the situation (or the situations) and experiences of women in society;

2. It treats women as the central "subjects" in the investigative process; that is, it seeks to see the world from the distinctive vantage point (s) of women in the social world;

3. Feminist theory is critical and activist on behalf of women, seeking to produce a better world for women – and thus, they argue for humankind (1988, 282).

The perspective highlighted in these three crucial points shows that women's lived and shared experiences have gradually come to be the basis of knowledge. From the general, universal, monolithic idea of 'woman' as a uniform category, the feminists have moved on to the perspective of the multitude, endeavouring to discover/ locate/ understand diverse, plural, conflicting realm of female experiences.

3.3 Issues related to the Portrayal of Female Subjects

Interestingly, many fundamental issues with regard to female subjectivity have emerged due to gender-based studies. A study focussed on Hindi Cinema and investigating the portrayal of female subjectivity on the celluloid needs to address some of these issues such as the nature of roles assigned to the women in Hindi cinema. Are these roles traditional or iconoclastic, conventional or unconventional? Do they help to break the stereotypes into which women are cast or do they help to

perpetuate the prevalent stereotypes and gender biases? These are questions that cry out for answers.

Therefore, in the context of the lived reality and beliefs in India, this discussion will focus on the representation of women in the women-centric films chosen for study. It will also analyse this cinematic portrayal vis-a-vis the female subject in the literary text that has been the launch pad for the film.

One of the key aspects of female representation, whether in a film or in a literary text is the 'role' assigned to women protagonist: whether she is a homemaker or a bread-winner, whether she conforms to the traditional roles or not. What makes the woman protagonist to step out of the threshold of home and hearth (private sphere) and take up new roles in the public sphere? How is this aspect represented in the films and the original text? This requires to be examined. After all, the traditional patriarchal society in India thrives on the gendered division of labour in which women are assigned 'feminine' roles confined to the private sphere of home and family. This is bound to be reflected also in the representation of the female subject on the celluloid, and affect the emergence of female subjectivity and the evolution of her identity. Hence, the selected films need to be studied in the context of the traditional notion of femininity vis-à-vis women in private/public domain.

3.4 'Femininity' vis-à-vis female subjects in public/private domain

The notion of femininity is reflected in most of the representations of the women subjects in Hindi Cinema. The reference point for such female portrayal seems to be drawn from mythology and folklore. According to Bhawana Somayya,

> Mythology and folklore have given Hindi Cinema easily identifiable images of women:
> Durga/Kali, the warrior goddess; Sita, the ideal wife; Shakuntala, the betrayed; and Savitri, the

saviour. It is remarkable that one of the most controversial characters in Hindu religious literature, Draupadi, has not found many takers. Probably this has something to do with the fact that she also happens to be strong, independent minded woman who did not lend herself to easy classifications so necessary for popular cinema (See *Mother Maiden Mistress*, 2012, 15).

In the light of the above statement it can be said that in the Indian context the attributes of femininity include 'feminine' traits/virtues such as obedience, loyalty and selflessness. A woman's struggle for autonomy and individual space is mostly misrepresented and is hardly given serious thought. Vrinda Mathur in *Women in Indian Cinema* underscores this view by observing that, "[T]he women are shown as having no sphere of their own, no independent identity, no living space" (2002, 66).

The division of labour vis-à-vis public/private domain calls for understanding 'two different worlds' of man and woman with regard to differentiated ability, role, identity, power. The public/private domain alienates the male/female from each other physically, socially, emotionally and creates sharp binaries.

In tune with such conventional binaries, most Hindi films depict women as dependent on the males, contented in their role of a home-maker. If a woman is shown as an assertive, economically independent, working individual in a given film, then she is made to suffer, become the cause of suffering of self and others as though to maintain the pervasive binaries in place. The realistic portrayal of working women is nearly absent.

In the films selected for the study, such as *Sujata, Ek Chadar Maili Si, Chakra, Pinjar* the women are assigned traditional roles. They shoulder the responsibility of caring and looking after the family. They are confined to the private sphere of home.

However, a few films provide such a representation of the female subject as to make the viewer aware that a woman may have a distinct identity. Hence, it is necessary to explore the roles assigned to women protagonists in certain significant films short-listed for this study and to assess how women respond to these roles.

For instance, Sujata, the female protagonist of the film *Sujata*, being a foster child and an untouchable, is neither educated nor encouraged to be economically self-reliant. Depicted as shy, quiet, kind, caring she manages the entire household efficiently. Ditto is the portrayal of the protagonist in the literary text by Subodh Ghosh on which the film is based.

As against this, her foster sister Rama is educated, confident, independent-minded, assertive and seems to enjoy a carefree life and higher status in the family and society that is in the private as well as public domains. This may be because she is the 'real' daughter of the house; but mainly because she is a 'high born'. Thus, the 'status' of the female within 'private' or 'public' domain, is conditioned by such extraneous factors.

In the film *Rudaali*, Sanichari, the woman protagonist takes care of her ailing mother-in-law. The sudden death of her husband compels her to work in the stone quarry. Ultimately, she is forced by circumstances to become a Rudali, the professional mourner, and bears the brunt of sarcastic remarks of high caste/class men who make her an object of humiliation in the public domain.

In the literary text of *Rudali* authored by Mahasweta Devi, Bhikhni works with a sense of total passion for the daily, routine household chores and wonders how those little jobs that she did in her friend's home could make her feel contented and happy! An extremely caring person, she is deprived of love and care from her own family.

She has internalized the domestic role of women which provides her with a sense of identity and purpose. The household chores seem to have a therapeutic effect on her by providing the traditional private 'space', the security and emotional fulfilment which women possibly crave for. For most women, especially in rural and small town areas, this may be the case.

In the film *Chakra*, Amma a woman-slum-dweller craves to be a homemaker and wants her teenage son to earn a little money to manage the household. Her entire life revolves around her desire for a home, and life of security. But unto the end, her dreams remain unfulfilled.

All the above examples create a very bleak picture of the 'women subjects' in Hindi Cinema and underscore not only the physical but also the mental confinement that restrains female subjectivity from emerging into a fully developed entity.

This draws attention to the view expressed by liberal feminist theorists such as Bird, Friedan, Janeway, Jessie Bernard among others that the'[S]exual division of labour, the existence of separate public and private spheres of social activity' has led to gender inequality and low self-esteem among the marginalized females confined to the private sphere of home and hearth since it involves an:

> [E]ndless round of demanding, mindless, unpaid and undervalued tasks associated with housework, child-care, and the emotional, practical and sexual servicing of adult men. The true rewards of social life – money, power, status, freedom, opportunities for growth and self-worth are to be found in the public sphere' (See Contemporary Sociological Theory, 1988, 296).

The above observation is relevant in the present discussion since some female subjects have been depicted as being liberated from the pre-determined 'roles' in the

private space to pursue self-fulfilment in the public sphere in the male-dominated society, but not without a long-drawn struggle and defiance of oppression/ subjugation.

For instance, in the film *Mother India*, Radha performs the role of the eternal mother; bearing, rearing her four sons, taking care of her mother-in-law. But when they are unable to repay the loan taken from the moneylender, Sukhilala, she works in the farm, assisting her husband in every way.

However, later compelled by unequal circumstances, Radha even lifts the heavy plough on her shoulders and breaks a major "conventional stereotype". Indeed, the filmmaker has projected a very unconventional and iconic image of the woman challenging the deep-rooted patriarchal norms that have been in existence from times immemorial. Interestingly, in Radha the traditional stereotypes of Sita and Savitri seem to merge and give rise to an ideal subjectivity marked by confidence, capability, and commitment to human values.

Likewise, in *Ek Chadar Maili Si*, the female protagonist, Rano is forced by circumstances to leave the private sphere of home when her husband Triloka is murdered. While working as a labourer at the construction site to be able to feed her family, the contractor tries to molest her. Her brother-in-law Mangal rescues her, but reprimands her for stepping out of her home into the unsafe, male-dominated public sphere. Though poverty is clearly evident, Mangal asks her, *"Tu kya vahan hamari beizzati krane gayi thi?"* (Did you go out for work in order to bring disrepute to us?)

This reflects the conservative patriarchal attitude that sees the woman's space as confined to the house and that refuses to acknowledge the capability and the privilege of the female as a substitute breadwinner. Ironically, at the end of the film she

overcomes her suffering, sorrow and vulnerability to evolve into a subjectivity marked by capability to resolve crises and forgive her wrong doer.

In *Bandit Queen* too Phoolan can be seen as an extreme case of marginalization, belonging neither to private nor to public sphere. She dares to violate the conservative norms of the 'private' sphere and develops the guts to abandon her oppressive husband. Therefore, she is treated in the 'public' domain as an object of ridicule and abuse by the upper caste men, who hold a sway over it. However, after enduring an unending spree of oppression, she finally emerges as a subjectivity capable of controlling the destiny of those who have abused and subjugated her.

3.4.1 Treatment of female subjects in unconventional roles

Some of the films chosen for the study depict that whenever women have ventured into public spheres to take on unconventional 'roles' they have had to face hardships, insecurities and exploitation. There is no positive valuation for the changing role of women from the private sphere of home to public sphere even if it is in the service of the household and is at the instance of its male members.

Three films, namely, *Bhumika, Teesri Kasam* and *Umrao Jaan* reveal the oppressive nature of conservative patriarchal social order, which has different standards for the males and the females with regard to the public sphere, as much as for the private one.

The biopic *Bhumika* depicts the misfortunes and the sheer apathy of husband Keshav towards Usha. Despite her hard-work, dedication towards her profession and her enormous talent and success, she was treated indifferently not just by her husband but also by her mother. She has been 'used' to salvage her family members from the dire straits of poverty by working in films. Unfortunately, her health and happiness does

not concern anyone. In the film, Usha expresses her utter exasperation and acute anguish thus, *" Ghar mein dum nahi ghutna chahiye na! gharvalon ki koi keemat honi chahiye na!"* (One should not feel smothered in one's home! Shouldn't family members assign some value to one!)

Sangtye Aika, the source text of the film *Bhumika*, also reveals the protagonist Hansa's disappointment about the indifferent and the money-minded attitude of her family even when she was severely ill. She mentions, *"Gharchya mandaleena paisa disat hota, majhi tabbyet disat navhati"*. (The people at home could only see money, they had no concern for my health, 2003, 28.)

In *Umrao Jan Ada*, (both in the film and the text) the protagonist, Umrao is sold to the kotha -keeper, Khanum Jan and the *kotha* inmates are the only 'substitute family' she has. Her original name Ameeran, her identity and social status is drastically altered and she is forced to become a courtesan. Eventually, she does earn name, fame, money and acquires high acclaim as a poetess and a singer. But Khanum Jan, the madam of the *'kotha'* continues to 'use' the talented Umrao to earn wealth. Umrao does not have any say in the decision-making process.

The film *Teesri Kasam* is based on the woman protagonist, Heerabai, a stage performer in a *Nautanki* (dramatic troupe). She is expected to entertain the crowd which comes to see her performance. Tickets are sold in her name and a lot of money is raked at the theatre counter, allowing the company owner to make huge profits. But her personal desires for home and hearth are mercilessly crushed by the ambitions of the theatre owner, the feudal attitude of the patriarchal society symbolized by the *Zamindar,* and, the prejudicial and stereotypical attitude of the audience of the *Nautanki* towards women-entertainers.

Heerabai, too, seem to have internalized the role of a professional performer, for she feels dejected and utterly defeated by the dilemma of whether to marry Heeraman or continue to play the role of a stage performer. In one of the significant scenes, Heerabai says dejectedly to her friend, *"Stage par ghanta do ghanta natak karna asaan hai, lekin jeevan bhar Sati Savitri ka natak mujhse nahi hoga…."* (It is easy to act on the stage for an hour or two but I will not be able to play the role of Sati Savitri for life). Perhaps, she does not feel worthy of Heeraman. She is torn apart by the conflict of her heart and mind and is also aware of the inherent contradiction between her dream and the fact that society will never permit an *outsider* (a danseuse) to become a respectable family woman.

3.4.2 Biopics as studies of female subjectivity.

The depiction of female subjectivity in a film also points to the types of 'subjects' selected by the filmmaker. What inspired the filmmaker to translate the biopic of Hansa Wadkar into a celluloid experience? In an interview to William Heide, Shyam Benegal expresses his views on the choice of this unique subject:

> Hansa Wadkar's autobiography was interesting because it was very frank. She held nothing back and she spoke her mind absolutely freely, which is rare for people writing their autobiographies. She had to create a space for herself in an era that was totally male dominated. So, she was, what one might call, an early feminist in the Indian context (2006, 85-86).

Shyam Benegal experimented with the film- form and tried to synthesize *real-life* and *reel -life* of Usha, the female protagonist. He also highlighted the struggles, conflicts and sufferings of a film celebrity and made the audience share the anguish, sorrow and loneliness of a woman performer/artist.

The intriguing title of the film *Bhumika* which means 'role' and has ambiguous meanings is quite significant in this context. Benegal reflects:

> Society demands several designated roles of a woman: that she performs as a dutiful daughter, a dutiful wife, a dutiful mother". But in a larger perspective, Bhumika is also a film about the film world and its screen heroines. It interrogates the whole nature of impersonation which encompasses the world of an actress and traps her into it – so that she is constantly playing and interchanging roles (as quoted by Geeti Sen, 2002, 121-122).

In the study of female subjectivities, biographies particularly autobiographies prove to be very useful source and provide many dimension of the lives of women personalities. Though the protagonist of *Bhumika* belonged to the traditional social set-up, she had the courage to speak the truth. Personal experiences of women from diverse backgrounds may not collate to be an identical/universal experience. Nonetheless, they do provide an understanding of complex and dynamic nature of gender relations. The women protagonists do not experience satisfaction, joy, emancipation even when they step out of the threshold of family/home.

3.5 Family structure and females as agents of patriarchy

The oppressive family structure which is generally patriarchal has created women's identity as a nurturer, homemaker in order to sustain the patriarchal system. To that end, it shapes female subjectivity. Patriarchy is the foundation of Capitalist society. By appropriation of wealth, property and women (who are also treated as 'property'), men tend to reduce women to subjugation.

According to Karl Marx and Engels, the relational basis for women's subordination lies in the family. The family as it exists in complex societies is overwhelmingly a system of dominant and subordinate roles. The double standard allows men for

greater sexual freedom…women are the chattels or possessions of their husbands. It is the economic determinism that led to '[T]he world's historic defeat of the female sex' (See Ritzer, 1988, 300).

In the film *Bhumika*, there is an incident which clearly reveals the role of women in supporting exploitative patriarchy and subordinating other women. When Usha enters the palace-like household, Kale's mother inquires, *"Tumhara koi bachcha to nahi hai?"* (You do not have any issue, I suppose!). Usha, who is a mother of a daughter, stays mum. Kale's Mother says, *"Jawan mard ko aurat chahiye"* (the youthful male desires a woman).

So also, in the film *Pinjar*, the abductor of Lajo (Puro's sister-in-law) is supported by his mother. Such dominance of patriarchy was further worsened by communal violence.

These episodes well depicted in the films expose the socialization practices prevalent in the traditional, feudal families, which mould women to act as the 'agents of patriarchy'.

According to Marxist Feminists, "Bourgeois women produce and train sons who will inherit their father's socio-economic resources." Rosa Luxemburg uses a phrase, 'the parasite of a parasite' to highlight this aspect (Ibid, 302).

3.6 Psychoanalytic view of female subjugation

According to the theory of psychoanalysis propounded by Sigmund Freud, the tendency to curb women's freedom with regard to the decisions of the birth, abortion, rearing of her children, and treat her as a mere object of possession could make man

nearly a paranoid, jealous, suspicious and cruel. A quotation from Hansa Wadkar's autobiography, clearly explains the nature of male dominance in patriarchal society:

> I was not at all happy. I was earning a lot of money, but it brought no satisfaction… Neither the money I earned nor my life at home helped me to find fulfilment. When Rekha was born I was eighteen. After that I was pregnant three more times. Each time I was overjoyed because I loved children. But every time my husband suspected that the child was not his. He would think, the way she behaves, it couldn't be my child. Actually I was very strict about these matters. They really were his children. But he was extremely suspicious (as quoted by Sen, 2002, 124).

The literary text states that Hansa was forced by her suspicious husband to abort her child for he suspected her of infidelity. The film depicts this aspect of dominance and exploitation very effectively. The behaviour of Keshav Dalvi, Usha's husband, could be well understood and explained by using Sigmund Freud's theory of psychoanalysis.

Freudian theory has been well incorporated and adapted by the psychoanalytical feminists in the 1980s:

> Men also are driven partly by envy of women's reproductive role, partly by their own passionate desire for immortality through offspring to seek to control the reproductive process itself. They claim ownership of women, seek to control women's bodies, and lay claim through norms of legitimacy and paternity to the products of those bodies, children. Finally, driven by fear, men seek to separate themselves from everything that reminds them of their own mortal bodies: birth, nature, sexuality, their human bodies and natural functions and women, whose association with so many of these makes them the symbol of them all. All these aspects of existence must be denied, repressed, and controlled as men seek constantly to separate from, deny, and repress their own mortality. And women, who symbolized all these forbidden topics, also must be treated as the *Other*: feared, avoided, controlled (See Ritzer, 1988, 304-305).

Indeed, the notion of body/mind dualism was not only perpetuated by the patriarchal norms of the society but also endorsed by the early sociologists and philosophers. This created sharp binaries between the two: the female represented by her 'body' and the male represented by his 'mind' or intellect, thus assigning an inferior status to women.

Gallop argues that "[I]t is not biology itself but rather the ideological use made of biology which is oppressive" (See Jaggar and Young, 1998, 79). The socialization practices in the male-dominated societies lead to the internalization of shame and guilt among women, wherein, the female body becomes culturally, historically defined as site of "guilt and shame".

3.7 Female subjectivities in the light of postmodernism

The development of Western feminism since 1968 has been marked by a critical engagement with postmodern theory. The existing notions of equality between the sexes, the prevalent binaries such as the male and the female, and the conventional ideas regarding emancipation, power, and authority have been challenged by the postmodernists.

They opt for 'multiple' realities and propose the use of parody, contradictions, rupture and irony as tools of perception or knowledge. They question the idea of "original" and claim that 'image' does not represent reality for strictly speaking, to them there is no single, integrated reality.

Post-modern theorists do not accept grand meta-narratives as the source of knowledge and experience. This approach paved the way to accommodate several stories and voices of the *unseen* including those of the non-white, non-western marginalized

women. Postmodernism, thus speaks for the *invisible,* the *excluded*, the subaltern who remain at the periphery of the society.

As such, in emulation of the postmodernists, opting for a discourse on parallel universes and multiple realities becomes pertinent, meaningful and relevant in dealing with the issue of subjectivity related to the representation of women protagonists in literature and the cinema based on it.

It is important to understand 'why' it is so. Women have been systematically marginalized in almost every public sphere including Hindi Cinema. They were generally accorded a less significant role and status. The representation of the female protagonist largely remained *type-cast* and 'trapped' in the clichés and stereotypical notions of the times. The patriarchal inclination of the Indian society and its ideological framework continue to determine the 'voice' and the 'image' of the female as well as the female protagonists.

This can be seen to have been done in two ways: 1. Generally, the Bollywood filmmakers, working with male-dominated subjects have taken up themes which elevate the status of the male subject, according greater autonomy, power and a unique status to the 'knower' (male subject) thereby reducing the female protagonist to a mere 'object' of his desires and aspirations (an 'object' for the hero as well as the viewers); 2. Even when female-centred themes are handled, a free rein is seldom given to a full-fledged projection of female identity. Instead, women are projected as *fictional constructs.* (à la Vrinda Mathur.)

Feminist post-modernists argue that, knowledge and power having been integrally related, "[T]hey have worked systematically to marginalize women, defining them as 'other' to the patriarchal order of meaning […] Postmodern theory challenges the

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status of both reason and the reasoning subject in the Western philosophical tradition"
(see Jaggar and Young, 1998, 75).

Thus, there is a significant segment of post-modern feminists who debunk the universal theories and the meta-narratives related to gender issues such as dominance, inequality, differences, female identity and power as essentially Eurocentric and male-centric. Their viewpoint is: there is no certain and absolute knowledge.

3.7.1 Questioning the hegemony of Western Feminism:

As discussed earlier, the most significant aspect of the contemporary feminist studies has been the inclusion of women from diverse strata of society into the focus of discourse. They question the hegemony of the Western feminism and work towards providing adequate representation to the concerns of the so called "Third World" women. They also argue against treating "Third World women as a singular category defined by their victim status" (Ibid, 83).

Taking a cue from the above view, it is important not to lose sight of the 'lived reality' and the perceptions that arise from the native/domestic experience of women in India. In this context the view of Madhu Kishwar is significant. She opines:

"Feminism, as appropriated and defined by the West, has too often become a tool of cultural imperialism. The definitions, the terminology, the assumptions, even the issues, the forms of struggle and institutions are exported from west to east" (Ibid, 118).

Vrinda Dalmiya also cautions that mere alteration of the terms used in the study of feminism or the justification of its continued use will not make the critical discourse indigenous.

The diversity within India compels the scholars to review the 'universalist' feminist theories propounded by the Western modernists. The deep-seated patriarchal set-up of the Indian society compounds and problematizes the issue of female oppression and marginalization. The lot of the female subject in India is thus doubly subaltern. There cannot be unanimity in interpreting the female subjectivity and subjugation of women in India by using Western critical paradigms blindly.

3.7.2 Mythology and post-modernism

Since Indian cinema makes wide use of mythology, the popular meta-narratives, it is important to discuss mythology in the context of postmodernist thinking. The world of performing arts and literature including cinema, particularly in India, provides useful insights and a variety of interpretations of the notions of 'womanhood' and 'ideal woman'. The following verse from an ancient Hindu scripture about the Mother Goddess would be a useful illustration:

> By you this universe borne, by you this world is created/by you it is
> protected, O *Devi*. By you it is consumed at the end/ You who are eternally
> the form of the whole world… (Ajit Mookerjee, 1988, 1).

The above-mentioned description of the Godess reinforces the ideology that *Devi* is not only the creator and preserver but also the destroyer of the Universe. It symbolises the layers of the multiple roles that women perform and the powers that women possess. All these polarised qualities seem to dissolve and infuse into one entity, which is believed to be absolute and supreme. Such feminine mystique and its representation in mythology is also prevalent in the West. However, in the words of Simone De Beauvoir, "[I]t is always difficult to describe a myth; it cannot be grasped or encompassed; it haunts the human consciousness without ever appearing before it

in fixed form. … [it] is so various that at first its unity is not discerned…" (1997, 175).

Consequently, when it is applied to the woman, she comes to be seen as "an idol, a servant, the source of light, a power of darkness; she is the elemental silence of truth, she is artifice, gossip, and falsehood; she is healing presence and sorceress; she is man's prey, his downfall, she is everything he is not and that he longs for, his negation and his *raison d'etre*" (Ibid).

Thus, in women-centric myth, the portrayal of the woman creates a sense of awe and mystery towards her benevolent traits. An 'object' of reverence is thus created by the patriarchal society so that women are confined to this 'image of the ideal woman'. As such, myths help create a mental trap by which women are 'conditioned' to aspire to live up to an illusion of what they are not; and the society is 'led' to expect them to be so. Hindi films derive this dichotomy with regard to the portrayal of the female subjects which are often rendered on the screen as mere *'fictional constructs'*, and not real women.

This *ambivalence* creates favourable conditions for the exploitation and marginalization of the female. It also helps create the mystery of the 'other' vis-à-vis the woman, who may be seen as divine or satanic but certainly not as 'human'.

Indian mythological stories highlight the ambivalence between *Sati-Shakti,* which has been craftily blended in the iconic image of 'Mother India' represented in the persona of the protagonist of the film. In her the binaries emerge and blur simultaneously, as she essays the actual role of the poverty-stricken, vulnerable but extremely virtuous Radha the *Sati* and yet signifies the nascent power and invulnerability of *Shakti*, in daring to rise unscathed above her predicament. In fact, in a scene where the money-

lender Sukhilala is about to molest her, she is shown symbolically to confront the image of Goddess Laxmi with the bitter words, ""*Ek baar maa banker dekho, tumhare panv bhi dagmaga jayenge*" (try being a mother once, you will find that even your feet fumble). The 'miraculous' upsurge of courage and strength that saves her, shows that a woman cannot 'be'. In fine, myths accept inchoate contradictions and abstractions to inspire an aura and idealism around womanhood. Ironically, the post-modernist thought also admits incoherence, contradiction and irony of these meta-narratives but to deconstruct them in favour of a pragmatic and empirical perception of the tangible and unenduring 'reality' that surrounds the female subject.

3.7.3 Recognizing the 'context' of the Subject

According to Foucault, the geographical and historical 'location'' of the 'knower' (subject) is a significant aspect of the analysis of the female predicament as well as consciousness. The historicity of the Subject needs to be investigated and therefore the postmodernist approach is opposed to the claims made by the proponents of Essentialism, i.e. about differences between male/female as being natural and universal.

'Gender' is defined as the culturally constructed identity of an individual based on 'sex'. In patriarchal society, the notion of sex and gender are inseparable.

Subjectivity is contextual. It does not have a uniform meaning. Women subjectivities have been a crucial and a complex area of study. Julia Kristeva speaks about 'subject in process', discarding the notion of static, unchanging nature of the subject. Judith Butler challenges the very notion of gender being dependent on sex. Laura Mulvey has developed a theoretical perspective on the issue of 'male gaze' in the sphere of visual representation of women. Thus, Postmodernist theories accept contradictions

and conflicts that exist in analyzing the issues of sex, gender, autonomy, power, subjugation and oppression of women.

The issues related to gendered subjectivity are indeed very complex and need to be seen in the context of other categories such as class, caste, race, ethnicity, family structure, education and the interplay of these aspects which combine and create diverse female subjectivities. Patriarchy as a form of dominance of men over women is intricately connected with other power structures such as caste and class. It draws its strength and sustenance from these structures and agencies and in turn strengthens these structures of authority and power. The embodied nature of subjectivity is also to be taken into consideration.

For example, in the film *Bandit Queen*, Phoolan Devi was exploited and oppressed not only because she was a woman but also because she belonged to the lower *Mallah* caste, and was a victim of poverty. The fact that she was also rebellious, added to her miseries; for it was certain that the male-dominated society would certainly not tolerate a female rebel. The ideological foundations deep-rooted in the society protect and strengthen the power of male and allow for the exploitation of the victim not only by the family but also by the State and society at large. Patriarchy strengthens the male/female differences and uses the biological differences as a means to promote gender differences, inequalities and oppressions.

The text, *India's Bandit Queen* provides an example of how the structural differences between different groups of women impact their lives. For instance, Putli Bai, the legendary Bandit, (who reigned the Chambal Valley before Pholan Devi), was not adversely affected by the caste system for she was a Muslim; whereas, Phoolan becomes a victim of the caste-based politics and her low caste status.

Since women play multiple roles, one has to analyze the shifting/ changing of the multiple roles and identities in the context of the subject. In the case of the film *Bhumika*, one can understand Usha's dilemma due to the dichotomous nature of public/private spheres, as well as her shifting roles and identities.

Amal Allana, a theatre personality shares a similar viewpoint. She argues:

> It has been problematic for me to comprehend and align the multiple voices that stir within me, that rise and abate, often straining in ambivalent directions, into a singular, unified, integrated sense of wholeness. To play out as many roles as an average Indian woman does in daily encounters, each with its own appended and idealized role model is more often than not a bewildering and schizophrenic experience (See *Women who dared*, 2002, 183).

The female subjects discussed here also provide a vivid spectrum of regional, ethnic, economic variations and therefore there is a conscious effort to include heterogeneous Subjects. For example, Puro is from Punjab, the area which suffered the trauma of partition. Sanichari represents a minority ethnic community from Rajasthan and Bihar which are marginalized due to their lower caste and so called 'inferior' role of the professional mourners. Umrao Jan Ada, an iconic personality symbolizes the sophisticated urban, elite culture of the courtesans of Lucknow. Phoolan represents the extreme case of marginalization and oppression of women in the ravines of Chambal.

3.7.4 The changing female subjectivities

We need to think of subjectivity not as a static phenomenon but as a process. In narrative cinema, the subject itself undergoes a tremendous metamorphosis and evolves as per the situation. According to Tina Chanter:

> Individuals are formed through a complex interaction that is played out between the ego and others, between consciousness and unconsciousness…The subject is no longer seen as

essentially a consciousness capable of knowing the world, or as productive and creative origin, defined as an autonomous agent and by its capacity to produce rational decisions (See Jaggar and Young, 1998, 264).

The evolution of consciousness of the subject depends on various factors. For instance, Rano in the film, *Ek Chadar Maili Si* chooses to forgive the murderer of her husband and give consent to marry her daughter. Her decision is guided by the higher ideals of forgiveness and acceptance. She evolves a consciousness not by rational thinking alone, but going beyond reason and mundane consideration. This is a distinct quality which she attains, perhaps because she is a woman, a mother. The power equation changes drastically, and Rano's status rises from a 'victim' to a 'benefactor'. The same is the case with Puro. From being a victim of abduction, she becomes a rescuer of another victim. One can appreciate how the women subjects who are otherwise defined as a 'victim' adopt strategies to harness power not for one's own benefit but for the common good; thus, bringing about a marked shift in the role, identity and power.

Rano and Puro exhibit both the traits; what can be termed as 'ethics of care' and 'ethics of justice'. The theory proposed by Gilligan, a feminist scholar, makes a distinction between 'male' conception of morality as an ethic of justice in contrast to 'female' conception of morality based on care and sympathy. In the present context, one can appreciate the interrelationship between care, sympathy and justice as against the distinction made by Gilligan.

In case of Phoolan (*Bandit Queen*), she grows into a powerful icon of the *dalits*. The transition of Phoolan from an extreme case of victimization to her rise as a political figure compels the reformulation of our notions of power and powerlessness. Of course, there are many factors that led to this transition. It clearly reveals the nexus

between caste and politics; both at the Central and the State level. Tina Chanter rightly says, "We are no longer assumed to be the only authors of our social scripts" (Ibid, 264).

The ability of women to adapt to new situations is amazing and therefore the study of biopic like *Bhumika*, *India's Bandit Queen* provides the film scholars with authentic evidence of emerging female subjectivities. The personal life of a few women could offer a great insight into their "lived experiences". It is essential that the voices of the marginalized be heard and that women share their lived experiences so that they could change the perceptions and the conditions of their lives.

Thus, the study of women in the selected works provides a 'microcosm' of the emerging subjectivities in Hindi cinema.

3.8 'Objectification' of women through the male gaze

According to Sartre, each autonomous self attempts to objectify the other through the "look". In the context of film viewing experience, the aspect of "look" is of utmost importance. The "look" determines, defines several crucial aspects of female representation. Since, the major focus of this chapter is the issue of subjectivity, Laura Mulvey's critically acclaimed essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" provides useful insights into how the male gaze objectifies women, especially the female protagonist. According to Laura Mulvey:

> The cinema satisfies a primordial wish for pleasurable looking, but it also goes further, developing scopophilia (love of images) in its narcissistic (tendency to self worship) aspect. The conventions of the mainstream film focus attention on the human form. Scale, space, stories are all anthropomorphic. Here the curiosity and the wish to look intermingle with the fascination and likeness and recognition: the human face, the human body, the relationship between the

human form and its surroundings, the visible presence of the person in the world" (1981, 207-208).

The fantasy world of cinema creates images to allure, enchant the audience. The hitherto *invisible* women personae are made *visible*, highlighted through the clever use of cinematic devices such as close-ups. "The look, pleasurable in form, can be threatening in content, and it is woman as representation/ image that crystallises this paradox" (Ibid, 209).

Most Hindi films are male-centric. They create an image of women according to the fantasy of the male characters and the audience (both the male and female audience). Also, the filmmakers in the chosen films are male (except Kalpana Lajmi, the maker of *Rudaali*).

According to Madhava Prasad:

> The gaze mobilized by the popular cinema is a national gaze which reads the woman-in-public and thus denies her subjectivity. The unity of middle-class cinema as an institution however, depended on an ability to create an audience whose gaze is responsive to the subjectivity of the protagonists, especially women (1998, 186).

3.8.1 Male gaze versus female gaze:

The distinct perspective of "being-for-itself" versus "being-in-itself" (the terms "being-for-itself" and "being-in-itself" were propounded by Sartre) is well depicted in the films through the 'objectification' of the female protagonist by the male gaze. A few examples are cited from the selected films.

For instance, the male characters in the film *Bhumika* seem to exploit Usha's emotional vulnerability, her deep-rooted insecurities, subjecting her to unequal,

inferior, insensitive treatment. The 'male gaze' as depicted in these films appears to be most relevant and effective evidence of her 'objectification'.

In the film *Bhumika,* Usha's husband, Keshav Dalvi looks at his wife suspiciously. His hawk-like eyes follow her movement minutely when she is with her co-actor, Rajan at a party. He is filled with jealousy and suspicion. His sense of being a 'nobody' (his identity being defined as 'Usha's husband') fuels his frustration; enhancing the violent, aggressive and selfish side of his personality.

In the same scene, Rajan (Usha's co-star) looks at Usha endearingly, feeling happy about her presence and the fact that she is paired with him in the film. His gaze is that of an admirer and lover. Women, even in women-centric film are the object of male gaze; 'being looked at' rather than the one who gazes.

In the film *Teesri Kasam*, the status of Heerabai, a *Nautanki* performer (stage artist) is doubly subaltern as she is a treated as an object of visual pleasure and lust not only by the wealthy *Zamindar* but all the spectators. She is treated merely a 'spectacle', which creates an image contradictory to the reality of her lonely and unfulfilled life.

For the innocent Bal Brahmachari (Heeraman's friend), she is *Siya Sukumari* (the delicate and virtuous Sita). For the drunkard (a character amongst the audience), she is a prostitute. For the rich landlord, she is the object of lust and can be bought at will and that she should be willing to please him. For, Lal Singh (Heeraman's friend), she is an object of desire. The young lad who is her servant, Heerabai is like a nymph, an ethereal being. For everyone, she is an 'object' of perception, an *unreal* mythical being, a temptress, a seductress but not a woman with dreams and desires of her own.

Unlike the generally used "male gaze" in the films, there are a few interesting examples of female gaze. For instance, one of the scenes in the film, *Teesri Kasam*, gives us a wonderful opportunity to see the reversal of the general rule wherein the female protagonist Heerabai looks at Heeraman lovingly. She seems to be enjoying every moment of his company, his innocent and awkward manner, his inability to face her gaze and her charming ways. But these kind of visual narratives are very few.

3.8.2 Commercializing the image of 'marginalized' women:

The film *Chakra,* created a controversy because the film posters depicted the bathing scene. Smita Patil, the lead actor who enacted the role of Amma was understandably very upset about the display of skin as a means to bring the crowd to the theatre. The film includes a 'bold' scene depicting Amma engaged in bathing; fully aware of the presence of the sweeper, Sonya and the fact that he is ogling at her shamelessly. The sub-human conditions of living in the over-crowded slums like Dharavi deprive the people living in the shanties, a life of dignity. This degradation is also described in the original novel. But when the film projects the descriptions of the original text visually, its meaning and impact alters (mainly due to the close-up shots and the camera angles reflecting the perspective of male gaze) to such an extent that the *body* of the women becomes the central focus and the real issue of human degradation is lost.

As such, when the filmmakers take up 'women-centric' issues as their subject, there is a danger of it becoming subversive; mainly because of the distortions in creating and the reading of the visual text. The intent of the director may be jeopardized by the audience who may have a casual attitude towards cinema; and much worse, may be

indifferent to the depiction of reality. In such situations, the best of filmmakers may fail to meet the purpose of creating social awareness through meaningful cinema.

The subject is seen as mere 'object' and this is the inherent limitation of the medium since the masses generally have known and seen cinema only for entertainment. 'Female body' as the *site* of visual pleasure continues to be used indiscriminately in the sphere of visual media. The autonomous subject (male protagonist and the audience) objectifies the 'other' through the 'look'. The audience, therefore, constitutes a crucial dimension of the issue of representation of female subjectivity.

In fact, the film *Rudaali* seems contradictory to the original text since it highlights the romantic angle, the beautiful looks of the female protagonist (the role played by the glamorous diva, Dimple Kapadia) and undermines the marginalization of the professional mourners.

The film, *Bandit Queen* was controversial for its depiction of violence and abuse of the woman protagonist. Does the extreme stance taken by the filmmaker serve the purpose of creating awareness about violence, abuse suffered by women or does it compound the issue of violence against women? The scenes depicting physical abuse of Phoolan Devi prompted social activists like Arundhati Roy to raise their voice against the 'insensitive portrayal of women abuse', and paradoxically for making Phoolan a victim of violence and abuse by the male/masochistic gaze of the audience.

The viewpoints of the film scholars seem to be dialectically opposite to those of the filmmaker Shekhar Kapur. In his interview to Priya Gupta, he elaborates on his involvement with the subject of the film:

> [I] need to make everything look larger and I fill them with more emotion, more story. My
>
> characters in my films were me, be it Elizabeth or…Phoolan Devi in Bandit Queen. How can

we claim to know characters on screen when we don't know ourselves? So you become the

character so that there is a certain amount of you in the character (See Goa edition, The Times

of India, 19.9.13, 4).

This example highlights how subjectivity of the filmmaker recreates a different persona, that too of a living legend.

It is evident that there is a significant focus on gender oppression depicting extreme violence and sexual abuse against Phoolan Devi which overrides the caste issue emphasized in the original text. Is the shift in focus, a consequence of concern for gender issues or commercialization of it?

The early feminists discarded female body and accorded it an inferior status. Intellect and reason were considered superior to body and emotion. An inclusion of "body as a site" is significant in the study of portrayal of women because film is a visual medium wherein body becomes an important site of vivid meanings and expressions.

The films provide a greater scope for the 'body' to become a site of not merely visual pleasure but as a 'site' that prompts the study and analysis of the representation of female morphology, motility, aesthetics, exploitation etc and the possibility of vivid interpretations of the cinematic images. This implies that the contradictions and the dichotomies inherent in the representation of female protagonists require to be discussed; re-reading the visual text.

3.8.3 Body as a site

Female body though negated/ignored, rendered invisible and accorded an inferior status in the Western philosophical thought; assumes a prime attention in the visual

representation in films. "The key site in Foucault for the exercising of power is the body" (qtd. by Jaggar and Young, 2000, 79).

There were times when men enacted female role; in such cases the body becomes a means of demonstrating 'female' ways of being. We find a fine example in Bal Gandharva, who did all the leading female roles in the immensely popular *Sangeet Natak*. He could magically transform his voice, gait, and gesture; make-up and costume doing the rest.

This reminds us of Judith Butler's analysis of femininity as "a mode of enacting and re-enacting received gender norms which surface as so many styles of the flesh" (Ibid, 321).

The emphasis on 'many styles of flesh' makes the body a focal point of study. According to Merleau-Ponty, human body and its many styles is both natural as well as cultural which he termed as 'connatural' (Ibid, 69). Therefore ideological interpretation of female body and its visual representation in films need to be focused.

Embodiment gives an account of how subjectivity is lived through various structures of the body. The human body is not simply a natural organism, but always "a historical idea". "Its structures which include spatiality and motility, expressive capacities and sexuality are thus social and cultural, as well as disclosive of individual style" (Ibid, 68).

In the film *Mother India*, we come across a series of iconoclastic images of Radha, the mother. For instance, the images of Radha smeared with wet earth during the floods make her a symbol of *Mother Earth*. The towering persona of Radha even in her downfall vis-à-vis the dwarf-like personality of Sukhilala is highlighted

purposefully. The physical beauty of Radha is basically derived from her virtuous behaviour and not merely from the sensuousness that she exudes.

In the iconic image of Radha carrying the wooden plough across her shoulders, she thereby breaks the convention and also symbolically represents *shiva-shakti* (the combined power of male-female).

The screen space is almost totally occupied by Radha in the extreme close-up in the beginning and in the end of the film. The scenes depicting *dissolves*, (a popular style used by Mehboob and Irani) makes her appear larger than life. The iconic images are derived from Indian mythological metanarratives.

In the film *Pinjar*, Puro's body becomes a means to convey the deep-rooted alienation and loss of identity for it is devoid of joy and liveliness. She hardly speaks, and suffers silently. Her body is used as a 'text' to convey the loss of identity. Her silence and her subdued personality are accentuated by the manner in which she occupies the screen-space.

In the novel *Pinjar*, there is a mention about a sense of resentment she feels for herself (mainly her body) for she gives birth to an unwanted child. She feels; 'Ek naram, safed keeda.... usse apne shareer se ghin ane lagi'.

Since embodied subjectivity focuses on experiential truth, it is all the more imperative to include 'body as a site' in the study of women representation.

Eve Ensler, in an interview to Purwaja Sawant reflects:

> Everything about the patriarchal structure has made women feel bad about their bodies, particularly about their sexuality. The sources of our greatest strength, power and life forces

have been contaminated by people's sexist interpretation of it. (See *Times Life*, Sunday *Times of India*, 23.6.13, 4)

One significant *character* that emerges on screen is "costume" and "make-up". Costume is defined as the second skin of an actor/artist. The filmmaker can work wonders to make the character look believable with the help of able make-up man and costume designer. For instance, the dusky complexion of Sujata (in the film Sujata) was deliberately created in order to carve out a distinct physical appeal of Sujata and isolate her from the rest of the family members (who had adopted her). The dark/dusky complexion denoted her *inferior* status; a reminder of her being an *untouchable*.

In the film *Rudaali*, when we watch the professional mourners enact the scenes of mourning; what is most striking is the physicality of the action. The price-tags for the act of mourning with varying degree of bodily movements is a shocking revelation of human degradation. The clear-cut dichotomy of body/emotion is expressed through the well-synchronized rhythmic movements of the body. The hypnotic spell is further enhanced by the use of music (a background score used as a leitmotif). Here the body becomes a site of collective catharsis and a statement of the simmering rebellion of the professional mourners.

Interestingly, the text does not make a mention of any physical attributes of Shanichari. But the film creates and uses femininity (with the focus on body) and romance as key elements.

In fact, almost all the female protagonists taken up for this study (except Phoolan Devi) conforms to the well accepted image of 'feminine' which reinforces male-female binaries. On the whole, woman in Hindi cinema are always depicted as pretty

and feminine in contrast to the macho male image. Thus, most representations in the film support the Essentialist view of the inherent contrast between male and female.

3.9 Conclusion

The experience of women is quite distinct from those of men. The role played by women and the multiple identities they have to assume are much more complex.

In the study of female subjectivities, biographies particularly autobiographies prove to be very useful source and provide many dimension of the lives of women personalities.

In the films under study, it is noticed that women, prefer not to cross the threshold except when driven by necessity as in case of *Rudaali, Ek Chadar Maili Si*. In case of *Umrao Jaan*, she is coerced by circumstances to perform. The nature and plot of Sujata precludes the possibility of her stepping out into the public sphere.

Freudian feminist theories help understand the domination and subjugation of female due to socialization processes and practices. Marxist and Freudian feminist approach highlights the family relational basis as the major cause for women's subjugation. Films like *Bhumika, Bandit Queen* and *Ek Chadar Maili Si* provide evidence of this.

Since this study undertakes to analyse the subjectivities of women protagonists from diverse sections of society, it has helped to understand the discursive nature of female identity and power. The notion of 'subject in process' has helped to appreciate the metamorphosis of the women protagonists from the status of victim to a benefactor, growing from powerless to empowerment as in the case of *Pinjar, Ek Chadar Maili Si* and *Bandit Queen*.

It is also discovered that the filmmakers use 'body subject' and high-pitched melodrama (in case of female protagonists) as a powerful means to ensure that movies become more impactful and commercially successful. The use of male gaze for visual pleasure is a reality and the re-presentation of issues related to the marginalized subjectivities such as *Bandit Queen* is unfortunately pushed to the back burner.

CHAPTER FOUR

Women-centric issues and Gender relationship
in Hindi Cinema

4.1 Introduction:

The present chapter aims at investigating the burning problems and issues concerning the women protagonists as reflected in the literary text and Hindi films based on it. An analysis of the interface of the text, context and its re-presentation in cinema will help understand the social dynamics that determines the status of women. This chapter also dwells upon the complexities involved in men-women relationship and their changing power equation using 'patriarchy as a context' with a special focus on the suppression and oppression of women in family and society.

The chapter undertakes to analyze the social issues that impact women's lives such as gender oppression, domestic violence, untouchability, rape, abduction, class-conflict, and their depiction in the literary text vis-à-vis cinema. Acknowledging the role of the Panchayats vis-à-vis the issue of gender justice, the depiction of Panchayat's intervention with regard to women protagonists is also discussed. In the course of the analysis the issue of female bonding, and the juxpositioning of the vision of the author vis-à-vis the filmmaker's vision, is undertaken. This, it is hoped, will help trace the evolution of 'women consciousness' and underscore the significant role of women as an *agent of social change*.

4.2 Patriarchy as a major concern

To begin with, it will be useful to discuss the complex concept of patriarchy. However, its overwhelming presence seems to be all pervasive and it is experienced

by women all over the world. Since the notion of patriarchy engages actively with the concepts related to gender, power and dominance, conflicting views are inevitable.

Terms such as women, gender, masculine, feminine are being scanned and dispassionately dissected by the feminist scholars.

4.2.1 Understanding Patriarchy

It would be a challenging task to arrive at a universal acceptance of the difficult concept of "patriarchy". The basic question of whether 'Patriarchy' as a system has evolved in the course of human history or is it based on gender differences inherent to human society has been often argued and debated. Whether Patriarchy involves oppression of women or does it also involve other hierarchical structures of society which victimizes men as well, is also a moot question.

Hence, an attempt is made to also discuss the notion of patriarchy in relation to the women-centric themes of the select texts and their transmuted version in the films. In decoding the nature, functions, and causes of the emergence of 'patriarchy' and its impact, the contribution of Marxist scholarship is seminal.

4.2.2 Family as the basic unit of Patriarchy

Both Marx and Weber saw 'patriarchy' in its literal meaning of power of the father. Apparently the jurisdiction and extent of such power pervades over the family in including the mother. As such one tends to agree with Marx's view of: "[T]he relational basis for women's subordination lies in the family, an institution aptly named from the Latin word for servant, because the family as it exists in complex societies is overwhelmingly a system of dominant and subordinate roles" (See Ritzer, 1988, 300).

Little wonder that reliance on the centrality of the family remains strong within many feminist analyses of patriarchy. In fact, the family is seen as the bastion wherein patriarchy flourishes; nurturing the unequal power relation between the sexes and legitimizing the oppression and subjugation of women by men. As Annette Kuhn puts it:

> The family … is constantly referred to, as the crucial site of the subordination of women, and its absence or dissolution, it is implied, would pose a threat to property relations both patriarchal and capitalist and even to the psychic relations through which … social relations are mapped onto relations of subjectivity. In this sense, the family is very often invoked as a final, catch all explanation of the various characteristics of women position in different societies and at different times (See Hearn Jeff, 1987, 38).

Patriarchy helps to define gender relations, power and oppression, beginning from the familial domain. Kate Millett's focus on "political power as the driving force of patriarchy" and "the family as a microcosm of societal power relations", help to understand the oppressive nature of family and other social structures of Indian society (Ibid 39).

It is impossible to ignore the historical fact that gender is a *social construct*. Women's subordination results not from her biology; but the 'biological differences' between the sexes is *used* as the most convenient and convincing excuse to assign an inferior status to women. Such social conditioning makes men "masculine" and women "feminine". Further, the long-drawn process dominated by socialization practices determined by patriarchal ideologies demarcates the roles, identities, experiences and most importantly the social status of men and women, privileging in most cases men over women. In fact, the prejudices and biases against women are extremely deep-rooted in traditional societies like India. Hence, the present analysis of the ten selected

literary and cinematic texts is undertaken. It provides a plethora of issues and concerns stemming from the 'patriarchal' social milieu, rooted in family, and offers perspectives on the factors that impact the life and predicament of the women.

In the film *Bhumika*, the female protagonist Usha is a victim of patriarchal social order and she suffers all the more because of her rebellious nature. The extreme form of patriarchal figure in the film is Mr. Kale; the *Zamindar*. He treats Usha as though she is his *property* and she has to abide by all the rules of the household with total submission.

Usha's husband, Keshav behaves in a selfish, calculated manner when dealing with Usha. He lives off her income and is very manipulative. Trapped in dualism of his role, he wants his wife to continue to earn and also keep a distance from her male colleagues, especially Rajan. Keshav is very suspicious and abusive. There is depiction of domestic violence and abusive behaviour towards Usha. The film *Bhumika* thus raises vital issues related to gender-oppression and inequalities.

It underscores the constant struggle of the protagonist Usha, who is but extremely bold and straight-forward in questioning the gender oppression. The film helps to raise issues related to urban-based, career-oriented working women, who even though they are financially independent and 'successful', but are suppressed under the male-dominated patriarchal institution of 'family'.

Control of reproduction, fertility, practices such as abortions strengthens the patriarchal social order. Thus, Roisin McDonough and Rachel Harrison (1978) see patriarchy in terms of the control of fertility *together* with the sexual division of labour; while Heidi Hartmann (1979) in her classic discussion of 'The unhappy marriage of Marxism and Feminism …' highlights male restrictions on female

sexuality and female access to economically productive resources (Ibid, 41).

Thus, earning and becoming financially independent does not necessarily ensure women empowerment; for in many cases they continue to be victims of domestic violence, mental torture, exploitation and apathy.

Interestingly, in contrast to Heidi Hartmann's observation with regard to the division of labor, *Bhumika* unfolds that Hansa is the bread-winner, crossing the threshold of *private sphere* and earns name, fame, wealth in the *public sphere*. Nonetheless she is oppressed by her husband. She is forced to abort her child against her wishes as he suspected her of having an illicit affair. As such, in her case Roisin McDonough and Rechel Harrison's equation of patriarchy with control of fertility is absolutely relevant although the factor of 'sexual division of labor' is not applicable.

The films based on biographies can be used as a significant tool to analyze the genderized nature of oppression. For instance, Phoolan's parents get her married at a young age of 14 with a much older man. The parents are paid in terms of a bicycle and a cow. The cold aloofness of Phoolan's father and the manner, in which he takes away a pair of silver earrings from Phoolan during *bidai*, makes us realize the heartlessness of the patriarchal social order. A girl is a 'burden' and a 'shame' and family becomes the perpetrator of victimization of the victim because the parents are not able to protect the girls. A society which is polarized by the forces of caste and class cripples not only women but men as well; for the one who assumes the role of the "protector" is unable to protect.

This raises a serious doubt about the criteria for defining 'patriarchy'. Can the oppression and subjugation of women alone be considered as the sole criteria for defining and analyzing 'patriarchy'? Can we delineate 'patriarchy' from other power

structures?

In the Indian context, we realize acutely that 'Patriarchy' is extended to socio-political institutions as well. The oppression of women is legitimized by allowing institutions like village panchayats to exercise their dominance over women in order to maintain a status-quo in society. Glaring evidences of the oppressive nature of panchayats are provided in the films chosen for the study.

4.3 Panchayats: a form of social Patriarchy

Panchayats have been the timeless, male-dominated, social structures with the powerful presence in the overall life of village community. To date the role and authority of the Panchayat with respect to issues of individual as well as societal nature concerning a community is unquestionable.

In the films chosen for study, there are sufficient evidences to prove how the *Panchayats* act against the interest of the marginalized; especially women.

The role of Panchayats can be analyzed vis-à-vis the attitudes of its members, decision-making process, the nature of verdicts and the power this traditional institution wields on the destiny of women. The Panchayats are thoroughly male-dominated; the elderly members are traditional, orthodox in their attitudes towards women. Their verdict is considered as final. Panchayats are both, feared and revered by the villagers since ancient period.

Films provide an opportunity for critical assessment of the role of Panchayat vis-à-vis the status of women in India. Among the selected works, there are four films which include Village Panchayats in their themes.

The film *Aurat*, (the earlier version of *Mother India*) based on rural agrarian set-up,

highlights many issues concerning Indian society. One of the issues was the exploitation of farmers by Sukhilala, the moneylender. When Sunder Chachi (The mother of Shyamu, the male protagonist) raises the issue of debt, the cunning moneylender calls the meeting of all the villagers and shows the accounts which are fabricated.

In the same film, the Panchayat gives a verdict against Birju (Radha's son) and the family is banished from the village. The pleas of Radha to forgive her son Birju are ignored. This kind of social ostracization was feared by the villagers, for it led to social isolation of the 'accused'; a punishment worse than death. Panchayats were means through which the rich and the powerful exercised their authority and crushed the voice of rebels such as Birju that opposed them.

The film *Mother India* too, projects the dominance of the rich and powerful in the Panchayat, symbolized by Sukhilala's victory in every conspiracy against the villagers, especially Radha's family. Shyamu (Radha's husband) does not know to read and the helplessness of the illiterate masses is brought to the surface. Later, history repeats as Radha's sons also are not able to read the accounts to verify the truth. Probably, *Mother India* was the first film which effectively provided significant evidences of marginalization and its impact, i.e. how the unjust social system based on exploitation of the poor by the rich corrupts the minds of youth like Birju, compelling him to become an outlaw and live on the periphery of the society; both, literally and metaphorically.

In the film *Pinjar*, the Panchayat is dominated by the Hindus. They object to the adoption of a so-called Hindu child by Rashid and Puro. The members forcibly take away the infant from Puro and Rashid. The ideology of fundamentalism is deep-

rooted in the psyche of the egoist, high-caste patriarchs who hold the reins of power at the village level. Not a single woman is shown during the discussion and it seems that women were not a part of decision- making process and only men decided about *nyaya, dharma* and *neeti.* The orthodox behavior of the Panchas is in total contrast with the basic values needed for the development of progressive, humane societies.

In the film, *Ek Chadar Maili Si*, the Panchayat is used by the villagers to solve the crises in Rano's family occurred due to the sudden demise of the bread-winner of the family. The underlying intent of the Panchayat was to control the robust, lively Rano who is widowed. Another crucial reason used in the text, was to dissuade Mangal, the young wayward brother-in-law of Rano, from getting into an affair with Salamat, a Muslim woman of the Arain community. The Panchayat dominated by the Hindus is unable to accept Mangal's marriage to a Muslim girl who belonged to a nomadic tribe. The Panchayat's verdict is based on prejudices against women.

The Panchayat members turn a deaf ear to the resistance of Rano and Mangal and resolve to get them married. Mangal, who runs away is beaten black and blue and hounded by the villagers. The marriage ceremony is performed when Rano and Mangal are in a semi-conscious state. What is right and wrong, just and unjust is decided by the members of the Panchayat with a total disregard to the opinion of the concerned individual.

In *Aurat* and *Mother India*, it is the class-struggle that is highlighted. Whereas, in *Bandit Queen* it is the complex social dynamics comprising of the rigid caste politics, poverty and patriarchy (characterized by gender oppression, violence) which becomes the core of problem. It is a vicious circle because the nexus between the caste hierarchy, class-conflict and gender oppression seem unbreakable. It makes for a very

dynamic and complex power grid.

In *Bandit Queen*, the Panchayat is dominated by the Upper-Caste Thakurs. Panchayats become a means by which the Upper Caste men inflict shame and humiliation on Phoolan and her family in public. In case of women belonging to the lower caste, the Panchayats behave extremely unjust and oppressive. 'Blaming the victim' seems to be their way of dealing with the issues related to women. In the remote villages, Police and Judiciary are less influential, less accessible and many a times conspicuous by their absence. Comparatively, the traditional institution of Panchayats wields tremendous power and hold over the villagers.

In the film, there is an episode wherein the villagers assemble to hear the verdict of the Panchayat in deciding the fate of Phoolan Devi. There is a case against Phoolan. She is accused of misconduct and blamed for alluring young men of the upper caste *Thakurs*. The decision of the elders of the village is basically the decision of the rich upper-caste *Thakurs* and the Panchayats are used by the upper caste, influential men to settle scores with their opponents. The stronger the hegemony of patriarchy in the society, the greater is the oppression and the hold of the village Panchayat over the individuals, especially women. It is the collective power of the patriarchs which is exercised to silence the voices of rebels like Phoolan Devi, and cripple their self worth.

In the Indian context, Patriarchal social order is all pervasive and in such situations it is always easy to target the women. Patriarchy does not only victimize women but also men who are of lower social status in terms of Caste, Class or any other power hierarchy. For instance, Vikram (the lover of Phoolan Devi) was a victim of caste-based politics and the Thakurs disliked him. The dacoits who belonged to the higher

caste (the Thakurs) would humiliate Vikram and pass lewd remarks about Phoolan. At times, he was unable to retaliate because he was aware of the power of the Thakurs.

In the text as well as the film *Bandit Queen*, one could sense the feeling of deep-rooted suspicion and antagonism which prevailed within the superficial calmness and solidarity proclaimed by the gang-members of Vikram Mallah. Therefore, one realizes that Patriarchy is not only oppression of women by men but it also includes oppression of the weaker (both men and women) by the powerful.

An analysis of films like *Aakrosh* and *Nishant* makes the audience realize that though the women protagonists in both the films become victims of violence and rape; their men (husband) were unable to protect the dignity of the women because of the power structure determined by the powerful class/caste. The men are relegated to an inferior status and made to feel impotent.

Men and masculinity is not one and the same; nor the idea of 'men' and 'women' have uniform connotation because of the diversity and dynamic nature of social reality and human relationships. According to most feminists, masculinity is connected with 'power' and femininity with the *lack* of it. But this sort of straight jacket approach may restrict our understanding of power dynamics between the sexes.

The Panchayats is a means through which the mighty assert their power on the weak and the voices of the marginalized are stifled. It is the political agenda of protecting the powerful that guides the decisions, the ideology of the Panchas.

Currently, the *Khap Panchayats* of the Northern states of India, especially Haryana, wreaked havoc by acting as a dominating, tyrannical village institution encouraging the patriarchs to take law in their own hands and punish the young couples who defy

the tradition and marry within the same *gotra*. Honour Killings has become a national issue of grave concern in present times.

4.4. Issues and concerns impacting women's lives

Films could be considered as a powerful social document for they reflect social reality. Films not only entertain but also educate. Several issues and concerns related to women could be studied by a careful observation and analysis of the medium.

4.4.1 Preference for a male child

In the film *Aurat*, Radha's husband Shyamu who wishes that his wife Radha should give birth to male child, says bubbling with joy, *"Char hatte-katte ladke chahiye"*. When Radha questions; *"Agar ladki hui to?"* He replies angrily, *"Ladki hui to gala ghont dunga"*. This denotes the gender-bias and preference for a male child. But with the birth of every child (son), the financial crisis deepens and Shyamu becomes more desperate. The news of the birth of third son creates sorrow and bitterness (Effectively depicted in the film *Aurat*).

Mehboob, the filmmaker has created these situations purposefully in order to sensitize the rural masses about the adverse impact of large families and the need to adopt population control measures. The issue of illiteracy is also highlighted effectively.

In the film *Chakra* too, the female protagonist, who is a slum dweller and has a son already, still expresses her wish for a baby boy of a 'fair' complexion. Preference for a male child is a consequence of the patriarchal mindset, across societal hierarchies.

4.4.2 Untouchability: the worst form of human degradation

Wrath (1931) *Dharmatama* (1935), *Achhut Kanya* (1936) created social awareness

about the issue of untouchability during the pre-independence era. In the post-independence era, Bimal Roy pioneered the movement of making realistic cinema that depicted social issues such as untouchability, feudalism, exploitation of workers and so on. His leanings towards the poor and the downtrodden perhaps came from his basic humanism rather than purely leftist ideology.

The issue of untouchability is sensitively projected by Bimal Roy in his film *Sujata*. The female protagonist Sujata, does not fight for her rights by openly challenging her foster parents or society but by her sense of love and duty towards them. Her compassion and selflessness defeats the meanness of the society.

The film deals indirectly with the issue of inter-caste marriage. Jayprakash Kardam opined in his article titled, "Moonh Churata Hai" that generally in the films the women protagonist belongs to the lower caste and the hero belongs to the upper caste. In reality too, it is mostly the upper caste men who marry women from the lower caste. "*Is mein ek or gandhivad ke achhut-uddhar se prerit daliton ke prati karuna ka bhav hai to doosri or shreshta ka dambh bhi*" (See *Cinema Ke Sau Baras*, 2004, 306). (It projects Gandhian ideology of compassion and emancipation of the *dalits* on one hand and promotes the notion of superiority of the upper caste male on the other).

This one-sided situation could be counter effective since it implies the upliftment of lower caste by the upper caste. This could strengthen the notion of superiority not only of the 'upper caste' but 'upper caste men' as well.

4.4.3 Class conflict

In the film *Teesri Kasam*, it is clearly seen that the entire social structure is geared to protect the unjust system which reinforces gender oppression and reification of

women. A professional performer is regarded as a "property" by the upper class rich *Zamindar*, an object of gaze and entertainment for the village-folks and a money-spinning machine by the owners of the *Nautanki* Company. The modification of the original theme in the literary text and the inclusion of *Zamindar* in the film, who tries to exploit Heerabai, provide an impetus/ basis for the decision of Heerabai to abandon the *mela* half way.

In his extensive research titled *"Phanishwarnath Renu ke Katha Sahitya ka Samaj Shastriya Adhyayan",* the author Sunita Devi Yadav analyses the theme from the Marxist angle. *"Yadi Teesri Kasam kahani ke marm ko samjhein, to ek baat spasht hoti hai vah yeh ki vanijyik vyavastha mein stree-purushon ke apsi sambandhon par bhi kuprabhav pada hai. Aaj aadmi, aadmi na hokar, naukar, shramik, babu pehle hai. Purush shramik ya gulam bante ja rahe hai aur striyan bazar ki vastu"* (1996-1997, 158). (Analysis of the core issue of Teesri Kasam reveals the ill – dehumanizing - impact of capitalist society. Today, a man is no longer just a man but a servant, a labourer, a clerk. The male workers are turning into slaves and women into market commodity).

Rudali, the literary text by Mahashweta Devi brings to light the class conflict, the issues related to gender-bias and the deep-rooted feeling of antagonism between the *Haves* and the *Have-nots*. The text is replete with powerful use of irony and satire. *Rudali* depicts the story of a woman who is a victim of poverty, prejudices and personal tragedies such as the sudden death of her husband and the unfortunate separation from her son.

But, the love angle between the low caste Sanichari and the upper caste Kunwar Singh is added in the celluloid version. This changes the content as well as the texture

and mollifies the tone of social strife in the original text. The razor-sharp rationale used by the Rudalis to secure economic benefits from the rich landlords, the craftiness with which Bhikhni and Sanichari exploit the weakness of the rich landlords (who rival to make death and mourning a 'spectacle') is well depicted in the literary text. The aspect of class-struggle unfortunately lacks the original sting in its transmuted film version. The filmmaker has overlooked the political agenda of the original work in foregrounding the personal ethos and pathos of a *Rudaali*.

On the other hand, Mahasweta Devi's Sanichari combats the power of the rich by transforming into a cunning, calculated professional; one who creates a brigade of rudalis, all women from the red light area. It underscores the seed of rebellion; the cynicism, satire, irony and antagonism aimed at the bourgeois. It is the victory of women power (the oppressed class). Thus, the author has effortlessly synthesized Marxist ideology with feminism.

4.4.4 Abduction

In *Bandit Queen*, Phoolan is abducted by the dacoits. Circumstances force Phoolan to become a Bandit. Puro is compelled into a marriage with Rashid and to accept a new identity, "Hamida". Ameeran becomes Umrao, a famous courtesan. These women had to give up all the dreams and hopes of living a normal life. The unjust treatment given to them was because the men treated the women as an *object* of revenge or lust. In order to punish the parents, the abduction of the helpless teenagers like Puro and Ameeran is done. The women have to carry the burden of family honour which makes them an easy target. In the present times too, girls/women are considered as the most convenient victims of abuse and violence in order to settle family feuds.

Phoolan was abducted because the dacoits had heard stories about how she left her

husband's home, (rumors about her became rampant mainly because she abandoned her husband and lived with her parents). She retaliates to the abuse by the young *thakurs* of her village and is punished by the village panchayat for daring to speak the truth. Social stigma is attached to women who either abandon or are abandoned by their husband and therefore she was abducted by a gang of dacoits. Phoolan becomes an easy victim of their lust and violence.

In case of *Pinjar,* Puro's abduction and forced marriage to Rashid leads to a feeling of deep-rooted rejection and alienation. The abduction leaves such a deep scar on her psyche that she is concerned about the plight of the women who become the victim of violence. She cannot punish Rashid directly for his behavior but her silent suffering, voluntary starvation creates deep-rooted guilt and sorrow in Rashid's heart. In the end it appears as though both are victims of hatred and they find solace in the benevolent act of rescuing the victims of violence and hatred; girls like Taro and Lajo.

4.4.5 Partition-related issues

A cataclysmic event which led to the division of the country was depicted sensitively by the author Amrita Pritam and the filmmaker, Chandraprakash Dwivedi. The author's perspective is influenced by the actual experience of the catastrophe and therefore, the novel provides intense and authentic depiction of the tragedy. Partition of India led to an unprecedented violence and massacre of thousands of people. The worst victims of the communal frenzy were women. According to the report made by Kamlaben Patel in Manushi in 1985, nearly 75,000 women had been raped and abducted on both sides of the border (See South Asian Cinema, 2004, 40).

Millions were compelled to cross the borders when the nation was divided and is known to be the largest exodus in the human history. "What remains astonishing is

that the Indian woman continued to be used as the *site* for the nation, where not only ideological but physical and legal battles took place. It becomes significant that after 1947 the war continued to be fought over her body or bodies" (Ibid).

The body as a *site* for defining the unity/ division of a nation, or for protecting/violating the honor of a nation, or as a territory to be brought under control or retrieve was symbolically and in reality represented by *female body*.

An essential aspect of the text and the film *Pinjar* which needs to be appreciated, is the humanist dimension advocated to solve the problem of violence, hatred and abuse (which mainly affects the women). Through Puro and Rashid, the author brings to the focus the message of love, compassion and peace. This makes the film relevant for all times and for all the people of the world because till date women are the worst victims of communal violence.

The unconditional acceptance of reality and the courageous stance of Puro to continue her life with Rashid convey a very significant message. The vision of the author Amrita Pritam is reflected without any compromise by the filmmaker. When Puro is offered choice to join her family, she says, "Lajo apne ghar laut rahi hai, samajh lena ki isi mein puro bhi laut aai. Mere liye ab yahi jagah hai" (Pritam, 2003, 118).

Khamosh Pani (2003) directed by Pakistani filmmaker Sabiha Sumar who has also authored the story of the film, addresses the problem of fundamentalism from a contemporary perspective and uses the flashes of memory from the past as a sub-text. The present (rise in Islamic fundamentalism by way of introducing Shariat laws in 1979) revives the buried memories of the past. It makes the viewer realize the perennial nature of the problem and its destructive impact on the psyche of individuals, especially, women. Maithili Rao, a film scholar opines:

> Khamosh Pani and Pinjar force you to see, hear and think about these forgotten lives shrouded under the evasive veils of hypocrisy, rigid ideologies and notions of patriarchal honour. Skeletons tumble out of musty closets into the glare of the present (hopefully more liberal) and we are made to confront our inherent prejudice and hatred, after we recover from our collective amnesia" (See South Asian Cinema, 2004, 114-115).

The film analyst Maithili's hope that 'people will be more liberal' way back in the year 2003 still remains a *hope* in 2013.

4.4.6 Woman: a victim of prejudice and abuse

In Mala Sen's biography of the Bandit Queen, Phoolan reportedly mentioned about strong prejudice and bias nurtured by the dacoits against women. For instance, the well-known bandit, Baba Mastaqueem, a patriarchal figure revered by all the bandits, warned Vikram Mallah that he should not include a woman in his gang because women brought bad luck and that their presence in a *baghi* gang symbolized death. After the death of Vikram Mallah and her humiliation at the hands of the *thakurs*, when Phoolan approached Baba Mastaqueem and expressed her wish to join the gang, he refuses to accept her in his gang because she was a woman. This one rule, he said, he could not bend.

Phoolan was also a victim of political system both at the State and the Central level. Whether to kill her or persuade her for surrender seem to be a game plan, masterminded by the politicians and bureaucracy for political gains. She represented the oppressed caste and was treated like a puppet in the hands of the powerful.

The kind of political negotiations hinted in the film are in sharp contrast with the efforts of great leaders who worked with the evangelical zeal, towards reforming the Indian society (It is important to mention about the genuine efforts by the great

leaders such as Loknayak Jaiprakash Narayan and Acharya Vinoba Bhave who tried to convince the dacoits to surrender).

Vidya Subrahmaniam , a journalist demystifies the 'image' of the Bandit Queen:

> Phoolan was also a victim of media hype for they used her image to sell their news. Phoolan was romanticised as dasyu sundari, the ravishing bandit. Tales were spun about her daring dacoity and her romance with her paramours. The Phoolan that emerged for the world to see was a waif-like child woman, her large frightened eyes, staring from a poke-marked face, her slight figure drowned in oversized bell-bottoms. The only giveaway was the revolver held high over her head. Phoolan's inglorious surrender shattered the myth of grandeur built around the way dacoits lived. The mystique gone, Phoolan became an object of scorn (See The Sunday Times of India, July 30, 2001).

There were so many versions of the events related to Phoolan's life that it has become almost impossible to separate fact from fiction. This was mainly due to media hype. Significant evidence in this regard could be cited. For the incidence of Phoolan's abduction by the *thakurs*, the filmmaker Shekhar Kapur prefers to use the episode reported by an American journalist Jon Bradshaw rather than Phoolan's version (as reported by her to Mala Sen in her jail dairies). The discrepancies in the two versions make the viewers confused about the credibility/ truth.

The film created a lot of controversy and strong reactions and counter-reactions from the women activists like Arundhati Roy. The mystery and glamour added to the word 'rape' has distorted our view on the subject. Ultimately, one could ask the most poignant question about the film: 'Was Phoolan Devi meant to be a mere spectacle'?

The crude display of sex, obscenity, violence and crime against women as depicted in media (in general) and Hindi Cinema (in particular) is a serious matter as it corrupts the minds of the audience and makes them insensitive. Women organizations have

linked the media portrayal of women to the rise in crime against women in India.

In a democracy, the media is capable of playing a pro-active role in creating and garnering public opinion such as in the Nirbhaya case (Dec 2012) which shook the national conscience and has raised vital questions about the state of governance, patriarchal mindset of the Indians, the laws regarding safety of women and offense against women. For the first time the voices of anger and resentment, especially, from the youth of India forced the government to re-look into the laws.

4.4.7 Displacement

The film *Chakra*, raises the social issues of displacement of a young couple from Bijapur to the Dharavi slum in Mumbai. The unexpected events that occur destroy all the hopes of basic happiness of home and hearth of the female protagonist Amma. The film documents with utmost realism the degradation of human living conditions and its impact on the lives of the slum-dwellers. The story has a strong sociological as well as political basis.

The film exposes several layers of class-struggle and the author Jaywant Dalvi uses the male protagonist Looka, as the voice of rebellion. For instance, Looka, an outlaw tells the teenager Benwa with a carefree abundance, "Haq koi nahi deta, haq chhinana padta hai". When he is sentenced for a crime, Looka retorts arrogantly, "catch those rich blackmarketeers first". It also highlights the anatomy of crime which breeds in the slums; social problems such as poverty, alcoholism, abuse, prostitution, unemployment.

She suffers from insecurity and is a victim of the violence of the State (police) that killed her husband and later, kills her unborn child. The film based on the novel titled

"Chakra" authored by noted writer Jaywant Dalvi gives an authentic description of Amma, her son Benwa and the kind-hearted goon, Looka. The film depicts the struggles faced by mother and son who strive to live a life of dignity, hard-work and honesty. The social milieu depicts city life which is devoid of sensitivity and reason, wherein several thousand slum-dwellers are forced to suffer silently or retaliate violently. *Chakra* symbolizes the vicious circle of poverty and deprivation. The film reveals stark reality and has been made with an agenda of awakening social consciousness.

4.5 Male–female relationship and changing power equations

The films selected for the study provide the viewers an insight into the male-female power dynamics. The woman protagonist of films *Aurat* and *Mother India* despite being traditional, rural, illiterate and poverty-stricken, are neither meek nor weak. Both are victims of poverty and natural calamities like floods or famine and suffer because they are abandoned by their husband. But they are seen as symbols of strength. They create image of the ideal womanhood. The greatest strength these women derive is from the notion of *Pativrata*; the pure and the virtuous one. They epitomize the notion of an 'Ideal', deep-rooted in the Indian subconscious and therefore the Western, liberal and modern values based on the principles of equal rights for man and woman would not only be inadequate but also inappropriate in understanding the ideological basis of feminine power as well as men-women relationship in the Indian context.

The film scholar Gayatri Chatterjee, in her extensive research, mentions about the filmmaker Mehboob's intent regarding the depiction of the woman protagonist. Mehboob wanted the depiction of 'motherhood' to be significant in a number of ways,

mostly staying within the traditional ideas, at times going beyond them. In the synopsis sent for the governmental approval, Mehboob states that the film is about the 'eternal theme of Indian woman', a mother 'round whom revolves everything that is sacred and glorious in our culture, tradition and civilization'. (Chatterjee, 2002, 48-49)

The strength of Indian womanhood, epitomized by Radha (*Aurat* and *Mothe*r India) lies in the ideology of duty/service, sacrifice and the fact that they can rise beyond their personal gains. The relationship of man-woman in the Indian context is guided by the traditional code and not the liberal ideas that emerged in the West. Therefore, these films could be considered as a landmark which eventually led to the creation of stereotypical images of womanhood (especially motherhood) in Hindi Cinema.

In *Teesri Kasam*, the sharp binaries in the characterization of Heeraman and Heerabai create a unique relationship between the two. It is the mystery of their undefined relationship and the abruptness of their meeting and separation that makes the theme of the film so very unique.

The story is based on attraction between Heerabai and Heeraman. The manner in which she manages to cast a hypnotic spell on Heeraman gives the story a folktale like texture. Since ages, whether in mythology or folktales, women are portrayed as man's *temptress*.

Heeraman behaves very protective towards Heerabai. Their relationship is neither 'defined', nor based on dominance/subjugation or exploitation. It is the oppressive patriarchal set-up of the society which fails to accept the relationship between a professional stage performer and a *gadiwan*.

In *Bandit Queen,* caste, class and gender form a deadly combination bringing to the surface many layers of oppression when one witnesses Phoolan, the victim of violence and oppression. With the exception of Vikram and her cousin Kailash, no man treated her with compassion. Phoolan mentioned in her diaries that the day Vikram repaid the loan of the *thakurs* (which Phoolan's father had to take in order to bail out Phoolan), she felt so overwhelmed by his gesture and for the first time she felt as though she was not Vikram's mistress but his wife.

In *Ek Chadar Maili Si,* Rano brings about a change in her own attitude and perception about her relationship with Mangal, her brother-in-law with whom she is compelled to marry. According to Sudhir Kakar, " [I]n Indian social history, the erotic importance of the brother-in-law – in the sense that he would or could have sexual relations with his elder brother's widow – was officially recognized in the custom of *niyoga"* (1990, 13).

Kakar uses psychoanalysis to decode the changing dynamics of relationship between Rano and Mangal, which is realistically depicted in the novel:

> He is like the boy who feels he bears the full culpability of being aroused by his mother. Beleaguered by his erotic yearnings for her, he does not truly conceive of hers for him. Rano, in contrast, is relatively more matter-of-fact and accepting of the paradoxes of the sexual realm" (Ibid, 14).

Other than the sexual politics, it is the need for *economic security* the core drive/motive that prompts her to accept Mangal. Her ability to adjust/adapt to the unexpected changes seems to be her forte? Rano's character affirms that it is an inherent and mostly unseen power of women that helps her to reach beyond the "survival instinct" to achieve subtler meaning and essence of life.

Very often a question arises: Is there a feminine instinct, a distinct way of reasoning, feeling which are essentially feminine? When, we analyze the characterization of the female protagonists in many of the selected works, we are prompted to believe that it is indeed female instinct, female way of reasoning and using experiences of the world which ultimately transforms the situation as in the case of *Ek Chadar Maili Si*. (The principle idea that man-woman are inherently different is advocated by the proponents of theories of "Essentialism").

The conflicts and contradictions involved in shaping their relationship is the major feature of the text. Triloka, the drunkard husband, Mangal the wayward younger brother of Triloka, the dominant, insensitive Panchayat which is patriarchal to the core, the nagging, abusive mother-in-law seem insignificant and petty in stature when Rano's assent is sought to forgive the murderer of Triloka. She forgives him and accepts him as her son-in-law. At the end, it is Rano's will that matters the most. She is the one who is the decision-maker. Such crucial moments though rare are nonetheless significant.

The author, Bedi's stance on the role of women (personified by Rano) is evident and is strongly highlighted in the text. "It seemed as if the future of the world rested on Rano's verdict. If she said "yes", life would begin again. If she said "No", it would spell doom of the world" (Bedi, 1967, 102).

Rajinder Singh Bedi places Rano, the woman on a high pedestal and makes her a crucial factor in the evolution of humankind and universal values. The author acknowledges the key role played by women as an agent of social transition and as a protector of moral code of the society.

In the film *Rudaali*, the relationship between Sanichari and her husband is not

discussed or described. The film conveniently by-passes Sanichari's husband and accommodates Kunwar instead. The unexpressed love of Sanichari for Kunwar and her refusal to become his mistress becomes the highlight of the story. The unconventional relationship between Sanichari and Kunwar and the melodious songs create a long-lasting impact in the minds of the audience. The film uses melodrama to bestir emotion of empathy for the female protagonist. M. Madhava Prasad highlights the use of melodrama in Hindi films thus, "[I]t could be said that all popular cinema is tendentially capable of being described as melodramatic" (2011, 57).

The film depicts a complex relationship between Sanichari and Kunwar. This relationship remains unfulfilled not only because Sanichari did not want to cross the *maryada* of a married woman but perhaps also due to the wide gulf between them with regard to their social status. The relationship is marred by the social dynamics characterized by caste, class and gender. These factors together create a society which nurtures injustice and exploitation of the weak.

The Marxist dimension based on the class conflict was overshadowed by the use of love, romance and melodrama.

4.6 Female Bonding: comraderie in suffering and sublimity

The depiction of female bonding is not very common in Hindi films. There are dozens of examples which depicts male bonding but the issue of female bonding is a rarity in Hindi films. Fortunately, a few of the selected films provide unconventional depiction of female bonding.

The film *Rudaali* as well as the text includes the relationship between Sanichari and her friend Bhikni which is based on empathy and care.

In the film *Bhumika*, female bonding between Usha (female protagonist) and the wife of Mr. Kale (Usha's step-wife) is highlighted well. In contrast to the text, Usha shares a very compassionate relationship with Kale's wife (who is bed-ridden with terminal illness). There seem to be a perfect understanding between the two women as both are a victim of autocratic patriarchal family. When Usha waits for her husband, Keshav, to rescue her from the captivity of Kale, his wife says sympathetically, *"Meri maan. Apni kaid se samjhauta kar le. Kahin bhi jaogi to kya badlega? Sirf bistar badlenge, rasoi ghar badlenge, mard ke mukhaute badlenge; mard nahi"* ("Listen to me. Compromise your captivity. Any where you go, what is going to change? Only bed, kitchen and the masks of the male will change; not the man."). This statement reflects the viewpoints of women who are oppressed by the patriarchal family system.

The filmmaker was perhaps concerned about the image of the actor (Hansa Wadkar) and tried to break the conventional belief that the step wives cannot get along well with each other.

In the text as well as the film *Sujata,* the bonding between the step-sisters is depicted very well. Although there are sharp binaries in characterization of Sujata and Rama, a wonderful relationship exists between the sisters. Here also, 'care' seems to be predominant behavioural trait of Sujata.

In *Mother India* too, the existing cliché or stereotypical depiction of mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship is not used. In this film, Radha, the daughter-in-law is caring and obedient. So also, the original text *Mother* written by Pearl Buck shows an excellent bonding between the female protagonist Mother and her Mother-in-law.

The finest examples of female bonding could be experienced in the film and the text *Pinjar*. The author uses personal catharsis of Puro as a means of her sublimation of

suffering, but also as a powerful device to develop empathy towards the victims of violence. The manner in which Puro becomes a source of transition wherein she plays a dominant role in rescuing Lajo, who was a victim of communal frenzy, is noteworthy.

It can be concluded that female bonding which is ignored, undermined and generally absent gets noticed to some extent in women-centric films. The area of female bonding needs to be explored and depicted effectively by other filmmakers as well. In fact, more sincere and consistent efforts on the part of the filmmakers are needed to underscore authentically and purposefully, the manifestation of female-bonding which acts as a silent system in ending suffereing and as a motivational force in sublimation of suffering into selfless love for others in a parallel predicament.

4.7 Conclusion

The village Panchayats has been depicted as autonomous, tyrannical power institutions that have complete disregard for the female protagonists and are unjust and oppressive towards them. It is also revealed that the Panchayats are used to silence and stifle the voice of the weak and the meek; be it women, minorities or the people of the lower caste, class.

Since the re-presentation of Phoolan Devi's life is marred by so many contradictions, it is impossible to separate fact from fiction. It is realized that the media hype, the depiction of violence and atrocities committed against her has led to a distorted perception of the women protagonist.

The film *Chakra* reveals the anatomy of crime which breeds in the slums like *Dharavi*. The film reveals stark reality and has been made with an agenda of creating

social awakening. It is realized that the film was made keeping in view the zeitgeist of the age.

The notion of feminine identity, status and power is in keeping with the traditional notion of *pativrata* and not according to the Western Liberal ideas.

The man-woman relationship in most cases is guided by the traditional code and is unaffected by the modern ideas. It is indeed female instinct, female way of reasoning and using the experience of the world which helped to transform the situation such as in case of Rano or Puro.

In the case of films like *Sujata, Ek Chadar Maili Si, Pinjar*, the filmmakers have acknowledged and depicted the role of women as an agent of social change. On the whole, they have been faithful to the vision of the author.

The issue of female bonding, which is hitherto neglected, finds prominence. There are examples of unconventional depiction of female bonding based on ethics of care, compassion unlike the much hyped, stereotypical depictions in the mainstream Hindi Cinema.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

This study titled *"Literature to Films: A Study of Select Women Protagonists in Hindi Cinema"* focuses on celluloid versions of well-known literary work, comprising Hindi cinema and their original texts.

The study has tried to understand the process of transmutation from literature to films with the focus on the portrayal of women protagonists. It has tried to explore the relationship between literature and films, and arrive at a rationally viable understanding of the impact and influence of literature on cinema.

5.2 Objectives identified

The following objectives were identified at the outset, and the study was geared towards meeting them to the extent possible in the course of this research.

1 To highlight the relationship between Cinema and Literature and provide greater insights into the nature of dependence/inter-dependence between the two media.

2 To discuss the inherent contrast as well as compatibility between the two media as modes of expression/communication.

3 To focus on the women-oriented films dealing with a wide spectrum of issues related to women.

4 To investigate the degree of sensitivity revealed by the male directors in handling issues and subjects related to women.

5   To study the emerging women subjectivities as represented in Cinema in post-independence period.

6   To understand the depiction of women protagonists in the literary and cinematic texts from sociological as well as feminists theoretical perspective.

7   To study the impact of various cinematic devices such as flashbacks, mirror images, dreams, motifs, fantasies, songs used by the filmmakers during the process of transmutation.

8   To compare the vision/perspective of filmmaker with that of the author.

5.3 Major findings of the study

Chapter One: Introduction

A survey of Hindi films showed that:

1. Hindi Cinema has been dependent on literature from its inception stage. It is possible to deduce that the progressive agenda in some outstanding authorial works inspired filmmakers. Many contemporary issues such as untouchability, prostitution, widow remarriage, women empowerment were addressed sensitively in several path breaking films over the decades.

2. Interestingly, it was found that in the films, as well as in their source texts, the core issue of the caste system has been inter-connected with the issues related to gender and this depicts the glaring societal reality of our times.

3. It was observed that adaptations mainly based on literary works brought about variety and innovation in the themes of the films. The major feature of the New Wave Cinema and Parallel Cinema has been its dependence on literature. The parallel cinema movement (late 1960s and 1970s) brought about major changes in the substance (themes) and its re-presentation. During this phase,

great literary works were adapted into cinema. Cinema was sensitive to the social needs and aspirations.

4. Hindi films based on literary texts in non-Hindi languages have reflected the regional flavour that goes with the language and context of the original text. However, despite regional variations, the themes related to gender issues have had a universal relevance and country-wide appeal.

5. This study of Hindi Cinema revealed that mainstream cinema portrays the female protagonist as an ideal, virtuous *Bhartiya Nari* (Indian woman) who adheres to the patriarchal ideology of the society, follows its norms and endures patriarchal excesses until pushed to limit of her freedom. It is observed that 'image' of women protagonist has been moulded by the ideologies deep rooted in mythological stories; amplified by the melodramatic form of narration. Therefore, generally, in the mainstream cinema, women characters portrayed are mere 'fictional constructs' and do not seem real.

6. Fortunately, a few filmmakers have worked with a missionary zeal to change the situation. They have chosen visionary, literary milestones and endeavoured to provide comparable celluloid versions that highlighted the plight and predicaments of the protagonists 'authentically'. The intellectual depth of the literary works has been synthesized with the aesthetic appeal in order to create meaningful cinema.

Chapter Two: Transmutation: Literature to Films

1. Film as a 'text' very often relies upon the synthesis of a variety of cinematic devices, for 'transmuting' a literary work into a celluloid version.

2. The film is often associated with novel for it provides immense scope for the filmmaker to adapt, modify and reconstruct the content of the novel.

3. It is revealed that the degree of fidelity of the transmuted version to the original text varies.

4. It was noted that the film *Teesri Kasam*, far exceeds in its impact; whether artistic or emotive, as compared to the original work *Teesri Kasam Arthaat Mare Gaye Gulfam*. In transmuting a literary text such as *Teesri Kasam*, the filmmaker Basu Bhattacharya could reach much beyond the limits of textual portrayal of the protagonist to re-create a female protagonist who can impact audience through her compelling subjectivity by allocating her a greater cinematic as well as emotional space and presence.

5. It was felt that some films are suited to adaptations more easily. Perhaps, 'adaptability' is the key factor which is considered by the filmmakers while selecting a story. The screenplay for the film *Sujata* was facilitated by the qualities of detailed observation and description of human relationships brought to the fore by Subodh Ghosh, the author of the short story 'Sujata'.

6. The study showed that every adaptation cannot and should not be judged solely on the basis of 'fidelity'. For instance, Kalpana Lajmi, the filmmaker of *Rudaali* has introduced thematic changes in the story, re-creating a story woven around the female protagonist Sanichari. In her story, Mahasweta Devi has emphasized Marxist ideology through discourse focussing on class struggle and gender oppression. She also portrayed how the exploited class respond to oppression by learning to manipulating. Lajmi, on the other hand, underscores the suffering of Sanichari as a tragic icon and focus on the irony of how personal tragedies convert her into a 'rudali'- a professional mourner.

7. It is discovered that the inherent difference between the two media poses a great challenge of transmutation. It also encourages the use of innovative

techniques in order to highlight the hidden thoughts and emotions. This is especially true in case of female protagonists, because the freedom to express for women is much less as compared to the autonomy enjoyed by men in a patriarchal society like India.

8. Films spatializes time i.e., it uses *space* for *time*. For instance, the filmmaker Shyam Benegal uses interior/*exterior* space as a leitmotif in the film *Bhumika*. The constant use of flashbacks synthesized with the *interior/exterior* space, drastically alters the perception and the experience of the film viewers. The film appears quirky. Bhumika is a suitable example of how the story/ narrative evolve from the flashback form.

9. There is a huge gulf between the percept of the visual image vis-à-vis the concept of mental image and therefore, the films rely heavily on a high-pitched emotional drama rather than engaging the audience in a serious intellectual exercise.

10. The film *Pinjar* provides an insight into the aspect of varying time-span. The shortening of the time-period in the film (to about 2-3 years) as compared to the original work (which evolves gradually over a time-span of about 13 years) adversely affects the authentic feel and the rhythm of the film. In the original work *Pinjar*, the relationship between Puro and Rashid appear to be more authentic, believable and mature because of the time-period of more than a decade whereas, the movie hastens to reach the climax which appears unrealistic.

11. It is also realized that the difference in time factor (in texts and films) compels the filmmaker to use a variety of cinematic devices creatively and innovatively. This brings in the element of filmmaker's subjective choice.

12. It was ascertaind that the transmutation devices, such as dreams, motifs, mirror-image, and songs, in the films were instrumental in bringing hidden feelings to the fore and in highlighting the women protagonists (in terms of voice and image) more intensely than in some of the source texts.

13. Flashbacks have been found to be an important part of narratives used in both literature and cinema, especially in autobiographies and biopics based authors. The two biopic chosen for study, namely, *Sangtye Aika* and *Bandit Queen* are based on real-life account. In both the films, flashbacks are used. The story of *Bhumika* evolves from the flashback mode of narration. The source texts namely *Mother* (Pearl Buck), *Chakra* (Jaywant Dalvi), *Pinjar* (Amrita Pritam) and all the three biopic used flashbacks to a great extent. Thus, it is revealed that flashback can be a handy device for effective analysis of the emerging female subjectivities. This has been done by linking the *image, voice* of women protagonist with what has been recalled by way of the flashbacks.

14. Dreams/Fantasies have been creatively used to reflect the suppressed desires of the character (mainly the female protagonist). Very often, dreams/fantasies are synthesized with songs, adding to the aesthetic and emotional intensity of the scene. Since most films deal with the marginalized women, these devices are found to be useful in highlighting the thematic concerns.

15. The film *Ek Chadar Maili Si* uses fantasy with cautions and restraint to protect the integrity of the main characters, namely, Rano, Mangal and Triloka. The grey shades of the human thoughts and emotions are well concealed in this commercial film, although the film is compelled to break the mould of an 'ideal, fictitious' portrayal of woman. However, Rajender Singh Bedi's portrayal of the female protagonist in his literary work is more intense and

credible, whereas the film tends to ignore the psychological ambiguities of the female protagonist.

16. Cinema relies more on 'action'. As such, dreams 'shown' on the celluloid in lieu of thoughts and imagination cannot be depicted without the help of audio-visual scene. It was observed that in films like *Pinjar* and *Rudaali,* dreams/fantasies are used as a device to indicate 'wish fulfilment' of the female protagonist.

17. Imageries, whether visual or verbal, have been used effectively in the selected works. There are significant examples of how verbal imagery is difficult to translate into visual imagery on the silver screen. For instance, in case of Pinjar, the rich poetic quality of the authorial work poses a great challenge to the filmmaker, who used songs, mirror-images, fantasy in the film.

18. Lyrics of the song create visual imagery, capture the mood of the protagonist/character, reveal his/her feelings, dreams, despair; in short, the very experiences of the character. The study has focused on the songs that are filmed on the female protagonist. Two films selected for this study, namely, *Teesri Kasam* and *Pinjar* provide evidence that a good literary works encourage the filmmakers to adopt poetic verses, folksongs into their films in order to provide authenticity to the transmuted narrative. The songs provide *voice* to the *voiceless* and are effectively used as a signifier of the emotional make-up, status, situations and the suffering of the women protagonists. Thus, songs form an important sub-text of narrative.

19. Mirror-image tells more than what is visible and reveals significant aspects of the protagonist's experience. For instance, In *Bhumika,* the mirror-images are used as a leitmotif to depict Usha's transition from *reel* life to *real* life.

20. It is found that the subdued personalities of the female protagonists such as Sujata, Usha find expression in *exterior space* whereas the *interior space* seems to stifle their feelings.

Elements of nature have always been used to symbolize human emotions. As such, motifs such as like rain, clouds, breeze, flowers, river were aesthetically and purposefully used to reveal the subtle emotions of the female protagonists. The elements of nature are used to signify the hidden feelings of the marginalized; the shy and *silent* female protagonist.

Chapter 3: Emergent female subjectivities in Hindi Cinema

1. Analyses of the films wherein the women protagonist have crossed the threshold of the private domain revealed that their oppression in the patriarchal family and society continued. For instance, Usha (*Bhumika*) worked to support her family but her husband continued to exploit her for money. In case of Heerabai (*Teesri Kasam*) and Umrao Jan (*Umrao Jan*), although they are talented and successful, they are still marginalized as women of low repute for the *kind* of professions they persue and also because they are women who are viewed as a *private* property by the capitalistic patriarchal and vested interests.

2. In the films under study, it is noticed that women, prefer not to cross threshold except driven by necessity and circumstances (as in case of Rano, Sanichari), and coercion (Umrao Jan, Usha). Nature of plot in *Sujata* precludes the possibility of her stepping out in the public sphere.

3. Women protagonist chosen for the study highlight the fact that women posses a high degree of 'Ethic of Care' as compared to their male counterparts. Whether it is in *Sujata, Mother India, Ek Chadar Maili Si* o*r Pinjar,* the

women protagonists (in the texts and the films) reveal attitudes and behaviour consistent with the 'ethics of Care', and derive moral strength through an attitude of selfless service and care.

4. In patriarchal societies, women are easy victims of violence. For example, in *Pinjar,* it is the 'non-identity' of Puro which haunts the viewers. Puro represents a sense of loss, loneliness and alienation. The oppressive patriarchal society alienates her from hope and happiness. So also, Umraon Jan and Phoolan Devi who were abducted, experience marginalization, loss of self worth and identity.

5. The gender discrimination against Phoolan, Rano, Amma and others is facilitated by the gulf between the *haves* and *have nots*. The study revealed that patriarchy is strengthened by other power hierarchies and power structures such as Caste system and Class system and these women are doubly subaltern.

6. The experience of women is quite distinct from those of men. The role played by women and the multiple identities they have to assume are much more complex.

7. It was found that, in the study of female subjectivities, biographies particularly autobiographies prove to be a very useful source of authentic information and provide reliable glimpses from the 'lived reality' of female subjects.

8. Freudian feminist theories helped interpret the domination and subjugation of females due to the socialization processes and practices. Marxist and Freudian feminist approaches helped to highlight the family as the relational basis for women's subjugation. Films like *Bhumika, Rudaali* and *Ek Chadar Maili Si* provide evidence of this.

9. Since this study undertook the analyses of the subjectivities of women protagonists from diverse sections of society, the postmodernist approach seemed to be most suitable, since it allows reformulating the epistemological concerns and the discursive nature of female identity and power.

10. The notion of 'subject in process' has helped to appreciate the metamorphosis of the women protagonists from the status of victim to a benefactor of other, growing from powerless to empowerment as in the case of *Pinjar, Ek Chadar Maili Si and Bandit Queen*.

11. It is also discovered that the filmmakers use 'body as subject' and high-pitched melodrama (in case of female protagonists) as a powerful means to ensure that movies become more 'appealing' to the viewer and commercially successful. The use of male gaze for visual pleasure is a reality and the re-presentation of issues related to the marginalized female subjects like the *Bandit Queen* are pushed to the back burner.

Chapter 4: Women-centric issues and gender relationship in Hindi Cinema

1. The Village Panchayats depicted as autonomous, tyrannical institutions have complete disregard for the female protagonists and are unjust and oppressive towards them. It is also revealed that the Panchayats are used to silence and stifle the voice of the weak and the meek; be it women, minorities or the subjects from the lower caste or class.

2. Since the re-presentation of Phoolan Devi's life is marred by so many contradictions, it is impossible to separate fact from fiction. It is realized that the media hype, the depiction of violence and atrocities committed against her has led to a distorted perception of the woman protagonist.

3. The film *Chakra* reveals the anatomy of crime which breeds in the slums like *Dharavi*. The film reveals stark reality and has been made with an agenda of creating social awakening. It is realized that the film was made keeping in view the zeitgeist of the age.

4. The notion of feminine identity, status and power is in keeping with the traditional notion of *pativrata* and not according to the Western Liberal ideas.

5. The man-woman relationship is in most cases guided by the traditional code and is unaffected by the modern ideas.

6. It is indeed female instinct, female way of reasoning and using the experience of the world which helped to transform the situation such as in case of Rano or Puro.

7. In the case of films like *Sujata, Ek Chadar Maili Si, Pinjar*, the filmmakers have acknowledged and depicted the role of women as an agent of social change. The filmmaker has been faithful to the vision of the author.

8. The issue of female bonding, which is hitherto neglected, finds prominence. There are examples of unconventional depiction of female bonding based on ethics of care, compassion unlike the much hyped, stereotypical depictions in the mainstream Hindi Cinema.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

1. The films chosen for study in the context of their respective source texts have established considerably that Hindi Cinema has been dependent on literature. All the films studied were classics adaptations from celebrated literary works. The progressive agenda of a given literary work, focusing on the woman protagonist has inspired the filmmakers faithfully adopt authorial vision, for instance, *Sujata.*

2. Issues such as untouchabiliy, domestic violence, abduction, communal violence were depicted sensitively by the filmmakers. All the filmmakers (except Kalpana Lajmii) were male. On the whole, they have portrayed the women protagonists sensitively.

3. Though, both, films and literature deal with 'telling stories', nonetheless, it is realized the inherent contrast between the experiences of 'viewing' a film is quite different from the personal experience/journey of the reader of a text.

4. The filmmakers deal with the challenge of mutual incompatibility between the two media by creatively using various cinematic devices such as flashbacks, songs, mirror-images, thereby adapting the source text innovatively.

5. The degree of fidelity of the transmuted version to the original text varies. With *Sujata* and *Chakra*, posited at one end of spectrum in being extremely close to the original, at the other end stands a timeless masterpiece like *Mother India,* where merely the baseline of 'a mother's lone struggle' is used by the filmmaker to re-create his own perspective on that womanly saga. Incidentally, its earlier version *Aurat* is comparatively closer to the original literary work, *The Mother*.

6. The emerging female subjectivities in Hindi Cinema have brought to the fore the marginal female subjects. Films like *Sujata, Pinjar* and *Bhumika* have highlighted the rise of women consciousness. The films reveal the overwhelming presence of patriarchy, (in family relationship as well as in society), its oppressive nature and its impact on women protagonists.

7. The study also reveals that the intellectual core inherent to the original text very often gets ignored and even replaced in the film by emotional components such as melodrama. Being a medium meant for an audience

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across the board, and since the vividness of the film medium prompts intense emotional involvement of the audience, the filmmaker is often tempted towards melodrama than a writer of a novel aimed at a selective readership may be required to do.

8. The filmmakers of *Pinjar, Umrao Jan* and *Ek Chadar Maili Si* very often ignored the psychological ambiguities and soliloquy experienced by the women protagonists which have been strongly depicted in the respective source texts. The introspective, self-reflective nature of the women protagonists such as Umrao Jan, Puro, Hansa as depicted in the respective source texts is considerably minimized in the films based on them. This brings to the fore the inherent contrast between 'words' and 'images'.

9. Given the vast material resources it employs, a film is driven by the market more than a literary masterpiece may do or may need to do. Thus market considerations very often sway the cinematic purpose since it is mainly a mass medium and aspires to a consumeristic audience. Example of film *Rudaali* is relevant here.

10. The element of 'boldness' of the original literary theme is often erased, in favour of widely accepted 'images' of ideal womanhood, in the transmuted cinematic version. For instance, Rano of the literary text *Ek Chadar Maili Si* is more intense and believable than its film version.

11. In some films, the gender-related issues are seen to be well synthesized with caste and class based ones. Films such as *Rudali* and *Bandit Queen* provide adequate scope for understanding the complex dynamics of caste, class and gender.

12. The films selected for study also provided scope for the depiction of female bonding, which had been a hitherto neglected aspect in Hindi Cinema.

13. Cinematic devices such as dreams, songs, fantasy, and motifs prove to be more impactful in films rather than mere verbal devices like dialogue, for they help provide, both a distinct 'voice' and a vivid 'image' to the women protagonists, by underscoring the psychological drives, individual aspirations and personal frustrations which constitute their subjectivities.

14. Most of the female protagonists in the selected works have helped to create a distinct image of female subjectivity. But the binaries between the male and the female, the issue of male gaze, and body politics need to be addressed with greater emphasis and sensitivity towards the female protagonists.

Relevance of this study:

The present research work was aimed at studying the 'transmutation' of literary text into films. It focused on the female protagonist as the core component to understand, interpret and highlight the 'transmutation' that occurs in adapting a literary text into a celluloid one. In this process, this study undertook an analysis of emerging female subjectivities as the criteria to assess the authenticity of cinematic version. It also analysed and assessed women-centric issues and gender relationships as portrayed in Hindi cinema.

In being one of its kind, this study expects to contribute modestly to an area hitherto unexplored by others.

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