Chapter Two

Review of Literature

The first chapter has revealed the purpose of the present study. It also has introduced Gulzar – as a poet and filmmaker. It also emphasizes that Gulzar is the last living link between old and new generations of filmmakers between the 1970s until today. The emergence of Gulzar as a director in the 70s has a great importance in Indian cinema. The 70s is considered as the diamond period of Indian cinema. The parallel cinema emerged in the 70s and Gulzar made some of his finest films in the 70s. Gulzar’s works have unending effect on not only the audience but also on his contemporaries and emerging filmmakers. Therefore, it is important to study Gulzar as a director.

The present chapter reviews the literature related to Gulzar as a director, his films and auteur studies. There are books written on Gulzar and his films. There is an exclusive website on Gulzar and his work. Periodical articles are featured time to time in newspapers and magazines. However, so far no research work has been carried out with reference to specific theoretical framework like auteur. This makes the current researcher formulate that there are some gaps that need to be filled by bringing Gulzar to the foray of research work.

Auteur study has become very common and important in the field of film studies. Although, auteur theory was almost abandoned long ago yet it is still relevant in the field of film studies. Auteur studies of renowned directors like Alfred Hitchcock, David Lynch, Martin Scorsese, Steven Spielberg, Howard Hawks, and John Ford etc. have been conducted in the past. As far as Indian cinema is concerned, auteur studies of directors have not been carried out in the academic field. No doubt, Indian cinema has produced great directors and legends but filmmakers like Guru Dutt, Mehboob Khan, Bimol Roy and Raj Kapoor and Gulzar should be studied in more depth in the academic framework. As pointed out earlier many auteur studies have been conducted on different directors abroad. In the absence of such works in India, the present study focuses on the films of Gulzar from auteur approach.

Although some literatures are available on Gulzar, but they are very less compared to his genius, status and creativity as a writer-director. National Film Archive of India (NFAI), Pune, has a good collection of newspaper and magazine articles on Gulzar and his films. These articles are reviews of Gulzar’s films and some article are based on interviews with the director. These articles are important as these provide some insights into the director’s mind regarding his own work. In these articles, Gulzar talks about his films, choice of stories,
characters, music, lyrics, love etc. These articles are not academic or systematic study of his films.

While collecting the literature on Gulzar, two books caught the attention immediately. The title of the first book is “because he is...”. Meghna Gulzar, daughter of Gulzar-Rakhi, has authored this book. Saibal Chatterjee has written the second book titled “Echoes and Eloquences: The life and Cinema of Gulzar.” The first book talks about the personal and professional life of Gulzar. “Because he is …explores the journey of Gulzar, famed director, lyricist, screenplay writer, short story writer and what he first and foremost wants to be known as, a poet!” However, this book is not an in-depth or an intensive study on Gulzar’s films. It is neither a critical work on Gulzar’s films. It has been written from a subjective point of view. “The book is a personal insight into the bond between a father and daughter and the tremendous respect they have for each other’s work.” The book has been divided into several chapters. These chapters are:

irshaad...
destiny in a song...
meanderings and musings…
lights…camera…action!
and then there were three…
films, fables and friends…
I am, because he is…
moondrops on celluloid…
woh jo shaayar tha and déjà vu…

The second chapter of the book ‘destiny in a song…’ is about how Gulzar landed into film industry. The third chapter of the book talks about how Gulzar made his first film Mere Apne. What the book lacks is the critical analysis of Gulzar’s films and his style of filmmaking.

Apart from giving insights into director’s personal and professional life, Saibal Chatterjee in his book “Echoes and Eloquences: The life and cinema of Gulzar” appreciates the creative genius, which Gulzar has reflected throughout in his films. The book also highlights some of Gulzar’s auteur signatures, brief but useful production history of his films and descriptive analysis of his films. The book also shares some of sweet and sour moments from Gulzar’s personal as well as professional life.

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The focus of these books is not to highlight the auteur status of Gulzar and his philosophy through detailed and in-depth analysis of his films. Still, both the books are very important documents about one of the living legends of Indian cinema.

There is an exclusive website “www.gulzaronline.com” on Gulzar and his work. The website provides the details of Gulzar’s works- cinematic and literary. This is an informative website, which lists all the films directed by Gulzar, books and lyrics written by Gulzar, his non-film albums, awards and so on. The website has different sections. For example, there is a section ‘GulzarNama’ that gives information about Gulzar’s life briefly. Another section ‘Katra Katra’ gives ‘details of Gulzar’s work including filmography.’ Some more sections on this website include ‘Chhoti Si Kahani Se’, ‘Angoor Ka Dana’, ‘Is Mod Se Jaate Hain’, ‘Aane Wala Pal’, Thodi Si Zameen Thoda Sa Aasmaan’, ‘Do Deewane Sahar Main’, Hawaon pe likh do hawaon ke naam, ‘Aao phir Nazam Kahen’, ‘Ek Akela Shehar Mein’, ‘Gulzar fan club’, ‘Dil Dhoondhta Hai’. In nut and shell, this website is very informative but not critical and analytical of Gulzar’s films. This website is like a skeleton, the flesh is missing.

There is another book on Gulzar’s films titled ‘Ganga Aaye Kahaan Se’ written by Marathi writer Vijay Padalkar. Manisha Lakhe says, “It’s intent is to explore Gulzar’s dual life, as a writer and as a director. He analyses 16 films directed by Gulzar, weaving a rich fabric embroidered with anecdotes about those films and embellishing each chapter with gems about the actors, technicians and touching moments shared by the cast and the crew when making the film.”3 The biggest drawback of this book is its language for Non-Marathi readers. Therefore, this researcher cannot read and comment on the content of this book. Lakhe, too, echoes the regret, “Sadly, the book is written in Marathi, depriving many non-Marathi Gulzar fans of this marvelous little tribute to his cinema.”4

The above-mentioned books do not talk about Gulzar’s visual style- mise-en-scène, set design, lighting, costume and cinematography – his use of close ups, long shot, composition, symbols, narrative structure, techniques etc. This is what is missing in because he is…. Echoes and Eloquences: The Life and Cinema of Gulzar and the exclusive website on Gulzar works. However, these books are an excellent source for those wishing a more detailed insight into the personal and professional life of Gulzar. The present auteur study of Gulzar as a director titled “Films and Philosophy of Gulzar: A Critical Study” will definitely fill this gap.

Some auteur studies that have been conducted at international level are being discussed here.

The website www.millersville.edu5 has listed auteur papers on renowned actors and directors of the world like Woody Allen, Ingmar Bergman, Frank Capra, Francis Ford
Coppola, Sergei Eisenstein, David Fincher, Quentin Tarantino, Ridley Scott etc. It is a helpful website to learn how to conduct auteur studies. All the papers on the website on its ‘Auteur Pages’ argue for the actor’s and director’s auteur status.

The auteur theory is still relevant in film studies because it helps to extract the philosophy of a director through thematic and stylistic analysis of his films. The auteur approach to film studies is helpful in two ways. On one hand, it helps us to identify an auteur through stylistic and thematic analysis of his films, and on the other, it helps to extract the meaning and philosophy of the director. For example, Gulzar uses flashback technique in his films, “due to his belief that the present is never complete until the past is reflected upon.”

Past dominates over present in his films. The characters want to get rid of their past.

Alexandre Astruc, French film critic and film director in his article “The birth of a new Avant-Garde: La caméra-stylo” which is the foundational article of auteur theory, talks about the concept of ‘caméra-stylo’ which means camera-pen. This article is important because in the article Alexandre Astruc says, “…contemporary ideas and philosophies of life are such that only the cinema can do justice to them.” What he tries to convey is that the director reflects his philosophy of life through what later on Andrew Sarris calls the ‘interior meaning’ - the third premise of his auteur theory. Alexandre Astruc adds that director can use the camera just as a writer uses his pen. In other words, the pen of a director is his camera.

Therefore, Alexandre Astruc’s role in the origin of auteur theory is important because of his concept of the caméra-stylo or ‘camera-pen.’

François Truffaut in his landmark essay “A Certain Tendency in the French Cinema,” which was first published in Cahiers du cinéma in January 1954 makes distinction between auteur and metteurs-en-scène. The third chapter of the thesis also discusses the distinction between auteur and metteurs-en-scène.

Andrew Sarris, a film critic and leading advocate of auteur theory, in his article “Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962” discusses three premises of his auteur theory. According to Andrew Sarris, “The first premise of the auteur theory is the technical competence of a director as a criterion of value. The second premise of the auteur theory is the distinguishable personality of the director as a criterion of value. The third and ultimate premise of the auteur theory is concerned with interior meaning, the ultimate glory of cinema as an art.” This is the most important article in the history and development of auteur theory. However, this article does not say anything about the drawbacks of auteur theory. What Andrew Sarris ignores is the collaborative nature of the film medium.
Peter Wollen, a film theorist and writer, discusses Howard Hawks as an auteur in the article “The Auteur Theory” in Signs and Meaning in the Cinema. Peter Wollen justifies his choice of Howard Hawks for an auteur study by saying that “Firstly, Hawks is a director who has worked for years with in the Hollywood system… Secondly, Hawks has worked in almost every genre.” In an article, titled “A Great Auteur- Yasujiro Ozu” Kantorates traces out the coherence in Ozu’s work and explains why Ozu can be considered an auteur. This article discusses and analyses two elements of Yasujiro Ozu’s films. The first is Ozu’s use of ellipsis (Figure 2.1 and 2.2) and the second the significance of his low camera angle (Figure 2.3 and 2.4). According to the writer, “Ellipsis refers to the shortening of a plot duration achieved by omitting intervals of story duration. It is a sudden cut of action that something in between is missed out.” The article is brief but important because the writer uses the elliptical and camera position images from Ozu’s two films- Late Spring and Tokyo Story, to illustrate his points; and images are very important in any auteur study of director. This article will help researchers who want to know about the techniques Ozu uses in his films and those who want to conduct detailed auteur study of Ozu. The article is relevant to the present study because Gulzar uses the technique of flashback in all of his films except Koshish.

The article titled “Citizen Kane – Welles as an Auteur” gives a concise discussion of how Orson Welles can be considered an auteur of his film- ‘Citizen Kane.’ The article is important because it locates the director as an auteur in his single film. The article argues that it is possible to be auteur of single film. This article was written in reaction to New Yorker critic, Pauline Kael’s criticism of Orson Welles as an auteur. The writer also discusses the three premises of the auteur theory. Of the third premise that is the ‘interior meaning,’ Carl - the writer says, “…the most complicated, yet at the same time the most mystic premise.” The article also answers the importance of auteur theory. Carl adds, “For one, it allows
viewers to distinguish between the styles of different texts and different artists.”

The article is a good argument for auteur theory and Orson Welles as an auteur. Tim Bywater and Thomas Sobchack say, “The two predominant methods of auteur criticism are straightforward. The auteur critic examines a group of films, pointing out their stylistic and thematic continuity in order to identify the film artist responsible for them as a significant auteur, or closely analyzes a single film so as to show how it relates to an already established auteur’s thematic and stylistic preoccupation.”

David Clarke Bath in his article titled “Welcome to Tykwer-World: Tom Tykwer as Auteur” discusses Tykwer’s film Run Lola Run (1998) from auteur perspective and argues that Tom Tykwer “represents a new type of auteur.” This is a good resource to see how Tykwer could become a model of new auteur.

The article titled “Woo’s Action Packed World of Cinema: An Analysis of Auteur Theory and John Woo” addresses the issue of director’s status as an auteur in the context of Andrew Sarris’s Auteur Theory. The writer discusses the three premises of the auteur theory and points out the weaknesses/problems with auteur theory. The writer says, “Auteur theory shows the connection between films done by the same director. However, it doesn’t state that if a director does not have a pattern of characteristics then they are a poor director. There could be an outstanding director that does nothing similar across their films. Another argument against auteur theory is that there are more people working on the set of a film than just the director. Other people would have an influence on the aspects discussed in what makes Woo an auteur.” The article closes with a strong argument in favour of John Woo. The writer says, “Woo’s action packed world of cinema is an argument for auteur theory, and his works gain him the deserving title of an auteur.”

There is a source guide titled “Auteur Theory and Auteurs” edited by Susanna Goodson and published by British Film Institute (bfi), National Library which is a must-read for anyone conducting an auteur study of any director. The important section of this guide is the case studies on renowned actors and directors like Woody Allen, Alison Anders, Andrei Tarkovsky, Orson Welles, Jane Campion etc. The guide also lists the books, journal, articles on auteur theory and its development, and auteur directors/actors. David Sharp, the Project Manager of this guide in an introduction to Auteurs and Auteur Theory gives an example to understand the debate surrounding auteur theory. It will be appropriate to quote the example. David Sharp writes:

“To start the ball rolling: a number of people have contributed to this guide – but (it might be argued) all under my direction. This could imply that this is my guide and that I am
therefore the author (auteur), but as the words are not my own, it is fairly clear that I could not be regarded as an “auteur”. If this was a film, and I was the director, we might argue as to whether my direction of the process was so complete as to overpower any input from my collaborators, and this is one of the key points that debates have revolved around: filmmaking is often such a collaborative process that auteurship might not be said to occur easily. A second issue to consider is about organization control: if this guide is a product of the bfi any claim I might have to be its creator might be nullified, in the same way that a studio system might influence the input of any director to their finished film.”

He adds, “…understand that there is a considerable European tradition that says that film-makers develop recognizable styles, unfettered by a studio system (even if they work within one) and the finished film expresses their own philosophy of life, thoughts, politics and worldview distilled into their own creative output.”

In an interview titled “The Contemporary Auteur: an Interview with Sally Potter” by Kristy Widdicombe, Sally Potter, a film director and screenplay writer (Orlando, The Man Who Cried, The Tango Lesson), answers most of the critical questions regarding auteur status of a director. He admits that the director puts his own stamp on the films. He says, “But every director puts their own stamp on the material and in some case radically changes it with directorial decisions. Because with a script you can go in a thousand million different directions. You can put the camera here, or there. You can radically change meanings with your choice of lenses, of locations, of sounds and music. You can shape a performance; guide an actor in many different directions. All these decisions are a complex and sometimes invisible form of authorship.”

British Broadcasting Corporation has a webpage on Auteur Theory in Film Criticism in which the idea of ‘auteur’ has been discussed with the help of case study on ‘Tim Burton.’ This article offers a concise and focused discussion of auteur theory. The article also touches upon the issue of the collaborative nature of cinema in which many artists- like cinematographer, scriptwriter, music director, editor etc. work together. It says, “In a collective medium, it is almost impossible to establish who has the most control.” However, it can be argued that any writer-director who writes and directs his films could be considered for an auteur status because writing and directing a film is more meaningful and is likely to make a film with the personal stamp and vision of the director. Although brief, this article is important because it also touches upon the concept of ‘Metteurs-en-scène.’ Metteurs-en-scène, the concept developed by Francois Truffaut, are the artists who just translate scripts
into film and who do not have the artistic control, personal stamp and vision, which is required to become an auteur.

There is an Indian website www.indianauteur.com, which lists some of Indian auteurs. For instance, Ritwik Ghatak and Vijay Anand are some of the Indian auteurs whose films have been added on the website. On one of the pages of the website titled About Us, the purpose has been mentioned. It is, “A group of individuals, inspired by their love for cinema, influenced by masters before them, excited by the possibilities of masters after them, and disillusioned by how things are so taken for granted, decided to write something, somewhere, collectively and started the IndianAuteur.com.”*21 Another important page of this website is its ‘French Pronunciation’ page, which has important terms and their pronunciation related to auteur theory. For example, the terms like Une Certaine tendance du cinema francais (A certain tendency of French cinema), La Politique des Auteurs (The Policy of Auteurs), auteur (author), Cahiers du cinéma, La Tradition de Qualité (The tradition of Quality), mise-en-scène, œuvre (work of art/complete filmography), montage (editing), decoupage (cutting) etc. The website also contains India Auteur: The Delhi Manifesto. They seek, “To incite discussion on the possibilities, limitations and viability of the application of the auteur theory as a critical prism.”*22

Considering a study of the above-mentioned literatures this chapter concludes that although some work has been done on Gulzar’s films yet there are some gaps. For example, as mentioned earlier, the books do not say anything about Gulzar’s mise-en-scène and his cinematography. Therefore, this is the biggest gap that the present study intends to fill. For example, Saibal Chatterjee in his book mentioned in this chapter, does not mention anything about Gulzar’s use of camera work, his signature shots, and symbols, flowing rivers, the presence of nature in Gulzar’s films. He does not talk about the cinematic techniques that Gulzar uses to establish the relationships, his narrative technique like dialogue hook, use of language, motifs in dialogue, editing, sound etc. This is where the present study becomes important and highlights Gulzar’s style of filmmaking and the motifs that he uses frequently in his films.

Gulzar has undoubtedly left his mark on the Indian film industry in his entire career as a filmmaker. He has written the screenplays, dialogues, lyrics and directed all his films by himself. He is also the producer of some of his films. His films depict man-woman relationship very sensitively. He also reflects his Punjabi culture in his films. Whatever the setting of the film, he never forgets to use a Punjabi word ‘AOvaoM’ that has a different meaning in diverse contexts. He uses this word in eight of his films. He adds humour in most
of his films. Some of his films reflect his sweet and sour moments of his personal life. Gulzar also makes the lyrics as part of his story. His lyrics reflect subtle emotions and feelings of the characters. He compares past with present in his films. Beyond doubt, Gulzar is an artist. So, more studies are needed on Gulzar and his films.

References

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