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
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 legendary 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 Chughtai. 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.


### 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 _nauch_ 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.


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.