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,

Film 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 

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
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
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 storytelling, 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 jhoot 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 saiyyam 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 hogayen 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,
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.