Conclusion

As has already been discussed in the third chapter, literary texts have always been providing the filmmakers with successful plots for their films. Adapting literary classics might have helped filmmakers in three ways: one, it could be a successful marketing ploy; two, it helped in giving film a respectable status by blending entertainment with art and three, it also served a pedagogic purpose as through films masses could be introduced to literary classics. Among these three reasons, the last one was not well received by the academicians in the beginning. Literary adaptations could not attract much attention in the field of film studies per se. Various reasons for prejudice against adaptation have been discussed in the third chapter. Among them, an important reason of looking down upon literary adaptations was critics’ focus on the question of fidelity to the original work. But during the later years, the growing interest among the film critics for literary adaptations is seen as a reaction against the use of theory (Structuralism and later post-structuralism) in film criticism. Gradually, critics started giving importance to the study of changes that come over during the process of adaptation.

Since fidelity criticism limits the scope of analysis and doesn’t give the critic the scope of touching other levels of meaning, film theoreticians and critics, even while studying literary adaptation, started touching upon other aspects of film criticism. Semioticians like Christian Metz and Roland Barthes have made significant contribution in the direction of film analysis. So far as adaptation is concerned, a semiotician would be more interested in studying how verbal signs are transformed or translated into cinematic signs during the process of adaptation; how these two different forms of text communicate and how the meaning is produced in two different forms of texts governed by two different sign systems. My endeavour in this thesis was to study the changes that a narrative undergoes during the process of adaptation. Though all the theoretical tools propounded by Genette for narratological study of fiction are equally applicable to film as well, yet the film narrative needs to be studied differently from the novel mainly because it is essentially a different art form. Study of film narrative cannot be limited to temporal and spatial arrangements of events or typology of narrators in the film narrative as it
Film narration, besides narratological perspective, is also an interplay of images, sound, cinematography and editing. When a novel is adapted into a film, the study of narrative should also go beyond the perspective given by the school of narratology. Though my proposal in the present thesis was to employ narratological tools to study narrative in fiction and film, in my conclusion, I shall attempt to go a little beyond my theoretical position stated earlier. I shall be looking into the way in which the film narratives have negotiated with their source narratives and how cinema communicates. In this direction, my attempt would not be to justify every change that is brought there in. I shall try to look at these changes with as much objectivity as possible. This will allow me to discuss film narratives in the light of issues pertaining to adaptation and also to make an appeal, especially to those viewers who are always looking for the book in the film, to change their approach towards literary adaptations. Marcus and Monk believe that adaptation shouldn’t be studied in the light of editing, mise-en-scène, montage, use of light etc. or from narratological perspective only, rather it should rather lead the study towards another kind of meaning finding—what they call the third level criticism. According to them, adaptation should be studied “within a historical and semiotic context” (Hayward 6).

One of the most conventional ways of studying adaptation is to see its closeness with the original text. As John M. Desmond and Peter Hawkes have classified adaptations into three categories in their book entitled Adaptation: 

Studying Film and Literature, both the adaptations would be called “intermediate” as neither the filmmaker has dropped all the major events and nor has he done page by page cinematic literal translation of the novels. However, as compared to The Householder, Heat and Dust is relatively closer to the original source. As has already been discussed in the third chapter, during the process of adaptation changes in the way of story telling are inevitable. The study of adaptation demands that the elements of narrative retained, dropped or added during the process of adaptation must be studied. The conventional ways of doing comparison is to study opening scene of the novel and the film and to make an assessment of changes, which are most likely to be there.
The study of characters and characterization is the most challenging and interesting part as in a novel, it is easier to ‘say’ any character’s behaviour or appearance; whereas in a film, what is stated in a novel is shown and cannot be stated overtly. Hence, what is generally said in the novel is only suggested in the film. The viewer has to decipher the meaning.

While speaking on the making of *The Householder*, in an interview given to Robert Emmet Long, James Ivory himself has confessed that had he had a team of professional actors, he would have experimented more with the characters. This throws light on a practical problem that every filmmaker has to grapple with and also on the nature of film as a creative medium. The inference is, in filmmaking a director cannot possibly portray everything he/she has in his/her mind unless he is working with a team of talented actors and also technicians for other aspects of filmmaking. No filmmaker or even the director of a play can give dimensions to the characters beyond the capability of his actors. What a director conceives has to be ultimately delivered by a group of actors. A novelist never confronts this problem, as he/she is creating a world in words only and can give any dimensions to his/her character that he/she desires.

Since both the mediums are governed by their respective sign systems, they have their own scope and limitations. Cinema has its own language which is different from the verbal language. In the case of adaptation, since the original text is also available, the filmmaker works under “the anxiety of influence” (Harold Bloom as in Cuddon 357) because his creation should not fail as a literal cinematic translation of the original text. Filmmaker has to evolve cinematic metaphors, similes, metonymy and synecdoche. In a way, film version must create or evolve cinematic language. Novels should not be shown in pictures. Frame does not have to conform to every paragraph of the book. Film is a different form of art and it has to be different from the book.

Since, in the case of literary adaptation, books are written before the films are made, it would be redundant to say that films are made in a different period of time than the books are published. This change in the period or history is likely to bring certain changes in the adaptation of the narrative as well. Second, if the original text belongs to a different culture, it also changes the narrative during the
adaptation which may be treated with prejudice if we, following the principles of fidelity criticism, keep looking for the original book in the film version. For example, William Shakespeare’s plays have been adapted into films. Twentieth Century Fox have produced film adaptation of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (1998), *Romeo + Juliet* (1996) and BBC has also produced film version of Shakespeare’s tragedies. BBC has tried to retain the flavour of the play in the film version, whereas the commercial film companies have changed the settings of both the plays to cater the demands of the market and the viewers. BBC’s films look like video recording of stage productions and are quite un-cinematic as compared to adaptations of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *Romeo + Juliet*. Though the commercial directors have not retained the flavour of the play, yet they have succeeded in bringing Shakespeare’s plays nearer to the audience. At the same time, they have also succeeded in making the film negotiate with its medium and also the plays, the source books. In *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, characters are driving bicycles and in *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo fights with pistols rather than swords. Just by changing the period of these fabulas, filmmakers have helped the viewers to identify with these characters which would not have been possible had the filmmakers been true to Shakespeare’s world. Other examples of how history can change the narrative are Wolfgang Petersen’s *Troy* (2004), a film adaptation of Homer’s *Iliad* and James Whale’s *Frankenstein* (1931), a film adaptation of Marry Shelley’s novel with the same title. Both the adaptations have been discussed in detail in the third chapter.

Similarly, some changes can be found in *The Householder*. To begin with, the opening scene of the novel is quite different from the opening scene of the film. In the novel, Prem is shown as a young man who is yet to attain manhood. Uninitiated young man finds the responsibilities of a householder too demanding for himself. Elderly young boy is yet to grow as a man and feels either uncomfortable with his sexuality. But the film begins from where the novel almost ends. In the film, Prem has found his feet as a householder in the beginning. He goes to attend a wedding party with his wife. Sits comfortably with her in the bus and during the wedding party, he, rather, initiates the bridegroom into what it means to be a householder. At this juncture, Prem’s opening words to the groom play an important
role in suggesting how Prem was struggling in his marriage and also Prem’s ability to understand a prospective householder. Prem tells the bridegroom,

I think you don’t feel so well. When I was married last year, I also didn’t feel so well. You know, I thought what should I do with a wife? I was quite angry. But you know, it’s not like that at all. Not like you think. Only in the beginning... When you are first ...... together and there is not enough money. So much worry; and when you come home, there is your wife. And you don’t even like her. You don’t know her. How can you like her?

This brings changes in the narrative at various levels such as temporal arrangement, point of view and narration. All such issues have been discussed in the last two chapters.

In the film version, Hans Loewe, Prem’s German friend becomes Earnest, an American. If both the texts (novel and film) are seen in continuity, they tend to make a statement on the increasing interest of Europeans (in the novel) and American (in the film) in Indian spirituality which was also a historical phenomenon as during the hippy movement many Europeans and Americans were attracted by Indian spirituality. Following the same argument of looking at these texts in continuity, Prem in the film is a different character from the one in the novel. In the novel, Prem struggles to grow into a successful householder; whereas in the film, he has already attained manhood and is in a position to initiate a prospective householder as well. Since the film narrative is constituted by Prem’s narration of his experiences to the bridegroom, the use of first person narration tends to make it a subjective narrative. The shift from objective point of view in the novel to subjective point of view in the film gives a particular meaning to the narrative i.e. to make the viewers look at the film as a householder’s spiritual autobiography in which he talks about his growth as man. In the novel, function of establishing Prem as a struggling householder and a professional is performed by the third person narrator whose attitude is critical of Prem and in the film, this task is done by the confessional mode of the narrative. Prem in the film is subsequent to Prem in the novel. This also allows us to see this adaptation and the protagonist in a different light.
In the film, everything filters through Prem’s consciousness (but cannot say his eyes). As is an accepted convention in cinema, if the entire narrative or a major part is narrated by a character narrator, it is the point of view of the character that becomes important and camera continues to be the story telling agency. For example, in *Chandni Bar* (2004) it is Mumtaz’s, the female protagonist, who is telling the story. But, according to cinematic conventions, it is camera that narrates the whole story because Mumtaz, being a character and victim of all limitations that are associated with us being mortal, could not be present every where. But in the film, Mumtaz is able to tell more than she could know. So, what is important for us is Mumtaz’s point of view in the narrative, but the camera continues to be the story telling agency. Similarly, in *The Householder*, though it is Prem who is narrating his past to the bridegroom; the story telling agency is the camera. It is the camera that tells us what Prem’s foreign friends are doing when he is not there and on all other such occasions. Though there seems to be a major shift in the narrative in terms of point of view, yet it doesn’t sabotage the discourse in the film. But at the same time, with the shift in point of view, the distance of focalization breaks down, which has its own critical and theoretical implications.

Even though the film-narrative is being narrated from a character’s point of view, it doesn’t affect the characterization. In the film, Prem is shown as a weak person, unable to control his class and not ready to accept the duties of a householder as happens to be the case in the novel. Sometimes, in adaptation, with the change in point of view, characterisation also changes. For example, in *The Great Gatsby* (1974), based on the novel by Fitzgerald, with Nick’s absence from the scenes pertaining to love between Daisy and Gatsby and Daisy’s repetition of “rich girls don’t marry poor boys” works to diminish the theme of the film and the film also fails to support with Nick’s point. Similarly, in *Apocalypse Now* by Ford Coppola, a much discussed but not a faithful adaptation of Joseph Conrad’s novelette *Heart of Darkness*, ascribing point of view to Willard substituting for Marlow, changes the whole meaning of the film as this act of substitution has been perceived by critics as an act of replacing Marlow’s sanity with Willard’s madness. By this shift in the characterization and the point of view associated with the character, the meaning of the film changes. According to Coppola, this change took
place because Marlow’s sanity is not possible in this world. But no distortion of this sort is happening in *The Householder* and also in *Heat and Dust*. Even with the change in point of view in *The Householder*, we find no change in the theme. The reason for this could be attributed to the cinematic convention that it is the camera that is telling the story in the film, not the character; second, in the film narrative Prem is initiating another young man which allows Prem to be critical about himself also. For a narratologist, what is more important is the change of the focalization of the film and the shift in characterization. This cinematic deviation helps in introducing Prem as a struggling young man. In the novel, the narrator has taken three pages to perform this function. To quote an instance of overt description in the first paragraph of the novel – “He was not too good at enforcing discipline, and that made him a little afraid of his students and in need of all the moral support he could give himself.” What is overtly stated in the novel has been successfully presented in the film.

As already discussed, literary adaptation must also be studied for the cinematic language that film version evolves during the process of adaptation. Without going into the details of analysis, I shall refer to few instances from each film to throw light on how cinema develops its own language. In sequence no. 8 of *The Householder*, the filmmaker has used footage from a Hindi film *Daag* (1952) in which Nimmi is singing a song. How this footage also becomes a part of the narrative has been discussed in the fifth chapter. Now I am more interested in the technique the filmmaker has adopted to show Prem’s feelings nostalgia about the days he spent at his father’s place and second, this can also be seen as an example of cinematic allusion. Though the filmmaker is American, by alluding to Indian cinema, he is trying to earn a niche for himself in the tradition of Indian cinema. This argument is strengthened by the fact that *The Householder* was simultaneously made in English and Hindi.

Important elements of narration in *The Householder* are one, dominance of memory and two, Prem’s complex sexuality which is premised with certain social taboos and three, his social background hangs heavily on his mind and shapes his personality. In the film, Prem tells Sohan Lal that he had no worries at his father’s house, his conversations with other friend, Raj Kumar, even the footage of a song
from an old Hindi film serve the purpose of emphasising the role of memory in the narrative. Indu’s loneliness and her brooding over her past, though this is not the way it has been presented in the novel, is shown cinematically with the help of editing. This takes the narrative back in time. The diegetic sound of running fan on the track helps in emphasising on Indu’s loneliness. Communication in this sequence takes place through images and sound - the two elements that cinema heavily dwells on; thus, makes the incident perfectly cinematic. Similarly, in yet another incident, the sequence no. 15 shows an argument between Prem and Indu in which there is very less use of dialogue. The communication is taking place through images and sound only, not words. This is how cinematic narration becomes different from narration in a novel which exclusively relies upon words. Whereas, in cinema, communication can also take place only with the help of images and sound.

Despite some differences in the film narrative, like the setting of Swami ji’s place (which, in the novel, is in narrow lanes of Delhi but, in the film, it is located in a place far from the crowded city and Swami ji sits under a tree); mother’s different entry in the film; Prem’s German friend becomes an American in the film; despite minor additions in the tea party or Indu’s brooding over and footage of a Hindi song from another film, it continues to be a good adaptation in terms of theme and translating the ambience of the novel. Since, this adaptation retains the core elements of the source novel without translating novel into film language page by page, it cannot be called a ‘close’ adaptation but an ‘intermediate’ one.

As compared to *The Householder*, the adaptation of *Heat and Dust* is closer to the original book. But however close an adaptation may be, it is impossible to translate every page of the novel into cinema. The film narrative of *Heat and Dust* also undergoes certain changes during the process of adaptation. The film narrative uses the language of its medium creatively and creates some ‘cinematic phrases’ which are worth discussing here. In the exposition of *Heat and Dust* (the novel), the first-person narrator tells us about Olivia’s eloping with the Nawab; Douglas’ getting married to Tessie and her (the narrator’s) own relation with Douglas, who is her grandfather. The narrator goes on to record her entries in her journal and her day-to-day record of her stay in India. The opening scene of the film, begins with Olivia’s running away from the hospital and yet it is different. Despite belonging to
the Narrative-I, this scene is different in nature from narrtological point of view. All the changes regarding chronology and typology of narrators have been discussed in the analysis part. The analysis has also discussed how, in the film narrative, point of view keeps changing both at macro level and at micro level. The shift in points of view and narrator in *Heat and Dust* is more intricate than in *The Householder*. Where *Heat and Dust* (both novel and the film) explores the possibility of relations between two different races like E. M. Forster’s novel *A Passage To India* does, inter-racial prejudice takes an important seat there. It is not only the Indians who are prejudiced against the British for political and historical reasons; the British, too, look down upon the Indians.

While discussing *Heat and Dust* here, my focus has been on the use of cinematic language in the film. In the last sequence, Anne, the narrator of the Narrative-I is looking at the windowpane of the house where Olivia lived after running away from the hospital. In the window, the Nawab is standing and Olivia is playing on her piano. By bringing Anne between these two characters of the Narrative-II, the filmmaker has suggested the confluence of two time frames in the film narrative. Its relation with the novel or the verbal narrative has been discussed in the fourth chapter, but what interests me here is the magic that can be done only in cinema or in performing art not in literature. Another interesting innovation at the level of narration is when Anne is reading Olivia’s letter. In the film, it is Olivia herself who reads out the letter. A very old form of narration in the history of novel i.e. epistolary mode of narration is given an interesting cinematic translation. The abstract entity of Olivia’s voice in her letter is given a physical and tangible manifestation in the film.

Other instances where the film narrative of *Heat and Dust* dwells heavily on cinematic language is pertaining to frame 5.28 - 5.29 in which a montage is created to signify overpowering image of death in Olivia’s mind when she saw the Nawab along with the brigands and from frame 5.30 - 5.35 in which Harry is shown nostalgic about England. Both the sequences have been discussed in the fifth chapter. Such instances give us simple and direct examples of how cinematic language is unique and it communicates in a different way from the verbal language. Such instances throw light on how what films can do and novels cannot, and vice-
versa. By understanding the nature of signs of these two different mediums, one attains better understanding of these two mediums and also comes to know their scope and limitation. Since the novel and film are governed by different sign systems and because of time constraints, it is difficult for a filmmaker to say every thing in the film which is said in the novel. During the adaptation, certain elements of narration are likely to be left out and certain innovations are likely to be made. Moreover, the way these two mediums operate also determines the nature of two narratives.

Approach to study adaptation is changing. These days, instead on looking into the issues of fidelity from where the study of adaptation started, it is being looked at as a matter of inter-textuality across two mediums. Since the definition of text has been liberalised by Semioticians, the boundaries are also being blurred. Inter-textuality is being seen across different mediums and different sign systems. Much discussion on inter-textual aspect of adaptation is done under the title of ‘genre’ as common film genres like comedy, tragedy, melodrama are broadly shared by novel and film. There are certain books which are inspired from a film. That also opens a new way of looking how the signs of these two mediums negotiate with each other when the relation between them is inverted. What is required in post-modern world is not to look for the source text in film or the novel rather to understand how these two mediums operate and the ‘reader’ (of the novel and the film) should adopt “polycentric” or “multi-perspectival” approach towards literature and film.

Both the verbal narratives and their adaptations are befitting texts for examining issues pertaining to cultural studies also. Since my endeavour in this thesis has been primarily to focus on structuralist aspects of narrative analysis, the stated theoretical does not allow to enter this domain of critical analysis. However, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala’s German origin, the fact that she was brought up in England and stayed in India for twenty-five years contribute to the study of cross-cultural issues in her novels. Moreover, when her novels are adapted into film, a medium of art associated with popular culture, though there are hierarchy of high art and low art with in the world of cinema itself, the film texts become independent texts worthy of critical study. While looking at the film texts in relation to the source novels, it is
inevitable to ignore the interplay of two different sign systems that operate in these
two mediums of expression. If words work by catering to our imagination, visual
signs give us real images but we have to make use of our imagination and
intelligence to understand their metaphoric function. Verbal signs are suggestive by
their very nature. Saussure’s idea of ‘Tree’ signifying the concept of tree can be
easily understood in relation to verbal language or signs; but in case of films, in
order to show a tree on screen, there has to be ‘a tree’. Verbal signs bank upon the
faculty of imagination of the reader and because of this freedom that the aesthetic
pleasure that a reader derives while reading a novel cannot be derived while
watching films. Every tree is unique in this world. The tree captured by the camera
or the tree chosen by the film director to be shot may or may not appeal to the
viewer’s imagination. It is because of this specificity of visual signs that the town of
X in the novel (Heat and Dust) becomes Dharamshala in the film and the unnamed
narrator becomes Anne. A film has no way to show any town X or an unnamed
person. A film has to be specific.

If reading a novel becomes a subjective experience, watching a film is a
community/collective experience. Films are always watched in a hall in a group.
Film narratives are meant for community. For that matter, novels are also meant for
community as no novelist writes a novel to be read by a single person. But the
experience of reading is highly subjective. In a class of fifty students reading
Thomas Hardy’s Tess, there would be at least as many as fifty different
visualizations of one character. But in films, it gives you only one face playing that
role. That’s why some times, film adaptation are criticised for these reasons. The
most common expressions heard after or about a film based on a novel are- “I think
the book was better.” Or “It has not retained the flavour of the book.” Or “You
know, there wasn’t my Pip or my Tess or my Olivia.” What we often understand is
that when we watch a film, we should look for the novel in the film. A film cannot
say everything that a book can. Though film falls back on a literary novel for a
fabula; it narrates the same fabula following its own creative and artistic
conventions. A film is meant to be different from a book or novel it is based on.
Even in a “faithful” adaptation, there are likely to be some changes; some events
are likely to be dropped; some creative innovations have got to be there. So, while
watching a film adaptation, one should watch a film only. One should not look for ‘the book’ on the screen.

In an interview given to Philip Horne (published in The Guardian dated October 27, 2000), Ruth Prawer Jhabvala while commenting on the issue of fidelity and some novels’ being “unfilmable,” says, …

JHABVALA: No, I do agree. Any adaptation, you do it diagonally. You can take up the theme but you can never, never, never do it literally. You’d come up with a kind of travesty, if you tried to interpret anything literally.

HORNE: But fidelity, is that important?

JHABVALA: Fidelity is not the first thing. No I don’t think so. Like I said, the theme and the feel of the characters- the ambience and their relationships- that is what you try and…but never, never literally.

Since a filmmaker and a screenplay are working in the format of 2hrs, it is not possible for them to portray each and every page of the book. This is possible only in a TV serial, not a film. Various novels have been done into TV serials like Wuthering Heights, The Golden Bowl, Pride and Prejudice. For example the length of TV serial of The Golden Bowl is about four and a half hours and the film is only 130 Minutes long. It is obvious that what the serial maker do in his/her TV serial, a filmmaker can never achieve that. A filmmaker is bound by the format of the medium of expression he/she has chosen. The maker of a TV serial can indulge in visual portrayal of descriptive passages in the novel; can develop characters slowly and also divide episodes of the serial in a better way than a filmmaker can divide his film in sequences, if this division is to be compared with division of chapters in the novel. Such a disparity in the nature of three narratives (novel, film and TV serial) born out of one fabula can also be another subject of comparative study of narrative in adaptation.

Despite all the prejudices against adaptation and besides vindication made for it, comparative study of narrative, especially when a fabula is narrated in two different mediums, is important because such a kind of study is based on the principle of “translatability of a given narrative from one medium to another” (Chatman 436). Cinderella can be narrated as a verbal tale, a film, ballet, as comic
strip or pantomime. Recent film version of *Spiderman* also justifies the same principle, as it has previously been narrated in comic strip and animation as well. The study of narrative deals with issues like temporal and spatial arrangement of events, their narration, focalization *et al.* But its study always reveals more than the structure of narrative in different mediums. It is only through comparative analysis of narrative that one can find convergences and divergences. One ultimately discovers the scope and limitation of two different mediums and realizes the potentialities of a medium to communicate and narrate. After understanding the nature of two mediums, the reasons for changes in form or content can be easily understood. The purpose of structuralist study is not merely to reveal the basic or deep structure, but through the understanding of the deep structure, one understands why and how a surface structure is different. In the register of linguistics, creativity at the level of *parole* can be understood if one understands the *langue*. The same principle applies on the study of narrative also. Different texts are like different utterances governed by the conventions of the medium and narration- the *langue* of narrative but a writer’s or filmmaker’s creativity lies in using the *langue* to create new *parole*.

This also justifies why narratology, which started with the structuralist study of narrative, has gone beyond structuralism. The study of narrative now includes the study of such issues as ideology, phenomenology, psychoanalysis, deconstruction, history and race. Similarly, within the purview of film studies, the study of films has also gone beyond the study of film form to include issues pertaining to semiotics, structuralism culture, class, race, history, feminism, deconstruction, Marxism, Queer theory, post-colonialism *et al.* Though in the present thesis, I had limited myself to structuralist analysis of narrative in two different mediums, I am quite aware of the fact that these very texts can invite a scholar to read issues pertaining to psychoanalysis, culture, race and history as well. The next step from this position can be to see ideological reasons or connections between narrative structure and other related issues that go beyond narratology.