

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Introducing the study:

Films are studied as art for their formal as well as aesthetic elements. Commenting on the necessity to study film as art, Richard Dyer writes,

Film-as-art discourses argue, or assume, that film is intrinsically worth studying. If they lean on wider discourses of art, of aesthetics or sometimes erotics, then this is only because film itself is an art and therefore valuable in terms of the art (2000: 4).

Study of films thus includes its technology, aesthetics, psychology, sociology of organisations and consumption, study of the audiences and a textual study of the film itself (ibid. 7).

Films reflect on the physical world around us. But, while reproducing the physical world, the cinematic space is filled with the filmmaker's feelings and imagination, thus influencing, not only the senses of the viewer, but also his fancy (Stephenson and Phelps 1989: 34). A filmmaker's view is also influenced by the socio-cultural phenomena and discourses that are prevalent at a given point in time and these also affect the film text. In turn, films as forms of mass entertainment also influence popular perception. The study of films thus involves various discourses to analyze both the imagery that it has built of the world (text) and also the external stimuli that impart meaning to the film text (context).

Films, with a more recent history than other art forms, have a range of areas to be influenced by and to borrow from. To borrow from Barthes's view of reading a text, the film text is replete with vast references to other art forms, discourses and historical developments, giving rise to their intertextual nature (Barthes 1989: 52-54). The conscious mix of genre (for eg., Bollywood entertainers), artistic style, elements, various artistic and intellectual movements, available

literary stock give films their intertextual nature. There are various ways through which intertextuality can be applied in the medium of cinema and in doing so the filmmaker may make an elusive, obvious, unconscious or deliberate reference. There might be the use of clichéd and formulaic symbolism in the film text. It can also at the same time borrow from a previous work of literature or other art form. Films are also replete with examples of remaking and homages that present the intertextual dimension of this medium. As earlier classics and blockbusters leave a lasting impression there is always an attempt by the later generations of filmmakers to make a reference to the previous text and give the audience an opportunity to connect the film with their earlier experiences, giving rise to an intertextual reading as well.

Cinema in India has come a long way since the first feature film was made. Today, many states in the country have filmmaking industries and the Indian film industry as a whole produces the largest number of films world-wide. From silent to sound to colour, Indian cinema has created a global brand for itself. While there have been commercials that served the palate of the common cine goers, art and parallel cinema have delighted the more 'refined' audiences. From Guru Dutt, Raj Kapoor, Satyajit Ray, Ritwick Ghatak, Mrinal Sen to Shyam Benegal, Indian film directors have drawn the attention of cinema lovers across the world.

While the male directors have made their impact in the Indian film industry and in the world, there is a league of women directors who, with their ingenuity, have been successful in producing some of the most critically acclaimed films of all times. From fantasy to commercials to parallel cinema, Indian women directors like Aparna Sen, Sai Paranjypte, and Prema Karanth have dealt and experimented with a wide range of film making forms which were much appreciated by cinema viewers and critics nationally and internationally. Women's issues have been never more intensely represented than by these women directors. Almost all these directors have shown great interest in examining the experiences, problems and hardships encountered by a woman.

While these women have created a wide ranging impact with their films they have been hardly a part of academic discourse. It is only the trio of Deepa Mehta, Mira Nair and Gurinder Chadha who have featured in some academic researches. Studies at length on these women directors are certain to come up with new discoveries and newer discourses in film studies research. It would be interesting to explore how these women directors are seeking to capture cinematically, the myriad experiences of women in various terrains of life. At the same time, their take on the various socio-political, historical, cultural and traditional issues allow them to be read from a variety of perspectives and vantage points.

The portrayal of women in films has been a popular topic of academic deliberation in the last few decades. Commercial cinema has been studied and also criticized for its maintenance of status-quo in so far as the issue of women's subordination in patriarchal society is concerned and also for strengthening stereotypes in the scripts. Feminist critics like Mulvey, Johnston and Kaplan write how women are reduced to mere spectacle and objects of voyeurism and excluded from their identity in cinema (Smith 2013; Smelik 2007). Majority of films, mostly commercial, tend to preserve the laid down rules and traditions. The heroines in popular Hindi films, after all sacrifice and struggle, finally conform to the norms of an ideal woman and this is shown to be where her victory lies.

Commercial cinema has absorbed many of the themes and textual conventions of traditional drama, utilizing them as a structural and thematic basis. It also shares with its epic and traditional predecessors, an inclination for emotional variety and stereotyped characters (Booth 1995: 186). For instance, talking about woman, Ann Kaplan writes,

[...] she is presented as what she represents for man, not in terms of what she actually signifies. Her discourse (her meanings, as she might produce them) is suppressed in favour of a discourse structured by patriarchy in which her real signification has been replaced by connotations that serve patriarchy's needs (2001:18).

In such a situation, the option open to women filmmakers is to use 'visual, aural and narrative strategies' to evade and explore alternative ways of filmmaking beyond the restrictive portrayal of women in cinema (Ramanathan 2006:1) to create new possibilities (Geraghty 2000:103). Women have been involved in film making since the silent era. These filmmakers, like their literary counterparts, have put an effort to build up a parallel discourse in film making as opposed to the dominant patriarchal traditions. For instance, *Wanda* (1970) directed by Barabara Loden, Lizzie Borden's *Working Girls* (1986), Prema Karanth's *Phaniyamma* (1983), Deepa Mehta's *Water* (2005) and Santwana Bordoloi's *Adajya* (1996) all build counter-narratives, keeping women at the centre of events and trying to highlight their perspectives.

The study makes an attempt to look into the works of the three women filmmakers – Aparna Sen, Kalpana Lajmi and Manju Borah – from three different film industries in the nation – Bengali, Hindi and Assamese respectively. Dealing with various socially relevant issues, the filmmakers interweave the positions and stories of women in the film narratives. There is a clearly discernible attempt made by the filmmakers to provide a subversive reading of the concerns of the women through the medium of cinema that is till date dominated by male professionals and their representational practices. In the domain of language that is perceived as masculine and an expression of patriarchal ideologies, Peter Barry mentions that the female writer is restricted by the condition of having little access to a medium which is principally a male apparatus in shaping the patriarchal discourses (Barry 2002: 126). The French feminist theorists emphasize that woman must write herself; must write about women and bring women to writing. Women must write about how they feel. This understanding of language can be extended to films as well. My work is an attempt to understand how the three women filmmakers have used and manipulated the medium of cinema to state their agendas as women (feminist agenda). Language, in this sense, acquires a much wider connotation than normal usage. By language here, I mean the language of cinema including both the form and content (the narrative). Cinema, by virtue of being a fast moving art form consumed by larger mass, needs to be explored at length to understand

the running threads that connect the women directors and their depiction of the women characters.

The women directors in their films have made an attempt to depict women differently; instead of being objects of spectacle and vehicles of glamour, women are represented as protagonists. Female language, according to Kristeva, is derived from a pre-Oedipal period of fusion of the mother and child. Associated with the maternal, language of women is not only a threat to culture, which is patriarchal, but also a medium through which women may be creative in new ways. Feminist film theory not only aims to change film criticism but also hierarchical and gendered social relations in general. The three women filmmakers use the film form to analyze and dismantle these unequal relations of power. While exploring the various intertextual relations in the films, form has been used as a tool by the women directors to challenge the ways of society, culture, economics and politics.

## **1.2 Review of literature:**

As the study is based on textual analysis, I have referred to some scholarly texts to map the theoretical outline and analyze the films. These texts helped me in shaping the central arguments of the thesis.

In *Intertextuality, The New Critical Idiom* (2000), Graham Allen writes that according to theorists like Roland Barthes and Julia Kristeva, texts whether literary or non-literary lacks in any kind of independent or autonomous meaning. He says that reading is a process of moving between texts. Allen traces the roots of intertextuality to the twentieth century work of Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. Saussure's notion of the differential sign helped to build the idea of intertextuality. In the book there is an attempt to trace the roots of intertextuality as applied by Julia Kristeva whose major inspiration were the Russian literary theorist MM Bakhtin and the Swiss linguist Saussure. It was Kristeva who used the term intertextuality for the first time. From Kristeva the author moves to Barthes who challenged the concept of the author in his intertextual readings. Then there are the structuralist approaches of Gerard Genette and Michael Riffaterre who employ intertextual theory to argue for

critical certainty or at least for the possibility of saying definite, stable and incontrovertible things about literary texts. Intertextuality similarly gives different interpretations when looked at from the perspective of postcolonialism and feminism. Intertextuality as a concept is applicable to a much wider area of reading than literature. It is applied in forms such as painting, music, architecture as well as films. The film industry has heavily borrowed from the literary traditions, paintings, histories of society, art and culture to allude to its intertextual nature.

In *After Hitchcock: Influence, Imitation and Intertextuality* (2006) edited by David Boyd and R. Barton Palmer we come across discussions about the breadth of Hitchcock's work and the influence it has had on many subsequent filmmakers. The writers allude to the theoretical works of Mikhail Bakhtin, Julia Kristeva, Harold Bloom, Gerard Genette, and Fredric Jameson in understanding and analyzing the connections between various traditions of filmmaking. Yet they say that the terms 'influence, imitation, allusion, and pastiche' that are used to point towards the intertextual nature of texts are sparingly used to explain the influence and reach of the works of any filmmaker. Boyd and Burton write,

In its exposure of the artificiality and permeability of textual "boundaries," the intertextual perspective provides a powerful description of the textual flow that characterizes the cinema. Intertextual theory certainly finds a suitable object in the multifarious relations of Hitchcock's films to those produced by filmmakers who are in some sense "after" him (2006: 7).

The book mainly explores the intertextual allusions to Hitchcock from Gerard Genette's view that intertextuality provides tools for analyzing the various relations among texts whose connections are established by the maker's (or remaker's) intentions.

Robert Stam in his *Film Theory: An Introduction* (2000) looks at the concept of intertextuality as propounded by different theorists and talks about their possible application in film analyses. He writes that rather than focusing on specific films or single genres, the theory of intertextuality views every text as related to other texts, and as thus leading to the formation of an intertext. Stam

first alludes to the concept of Bakhtin's dialogism. The concept of dialogism suggests that every text forms an intersection of textual surfaces opening a never-ending range of possibilities and interpretations. Cinema, from this point of view inherits a huge artistic tradition and is embedded within the entire history of arts. Stam also writes about Harold Bloom's argument in the *Anxiety of Influence* that literary art develops out of an interactive and generational struggle with strong Oedipal overtones. Stam provides a critique of the theory of intertextuality as being masculinist in its approach. Bloom paves a way for the feminist critics and other marginalized groups for building an intertextual reading free from the clutches of masculine forms of expression.

Tim Woods in *Beginning Postmodernism* (1999) writes about the intertextual nature of postmodern television and film. Frequent borrowings, splicings, relentless intertextuality and pillage of other genres are the features of postmodern television. Postmodernist film is a pastiche of many genres and is comfortable with mixing together many disparate kinds of film, styles and ways of film-making together into the same movie. It evokes nostalgia, films which are about past and made in the present, films that reinvent the past and films set in the present which evoke the past. The *Indiana Jones* trilogy incorporates such intertextuality either by referring to other genres or to earlier episodes in the series.

Jill Nelmes in *An Introduction to Film Studies* (2012) writes about the Hollywood films of the 1980s and their use of bricolage. These films included self-conscious references, generic references from the huge storehouse of images and memories of film accumulated through repeated viewings from the past. Access to the storehouse has created a genre of literate culture. There is free use of generic signifiers. In this awareness of genre there is a knowingness and self-consciousness on part of the film-maker as well as the audience, giving rise to intertextuality or texts 'talking' to texts. In a case study of Martin Scorsese's *New York, New York*, Nelmes says that the concept of the auteur fails to explain all elements in a film and it is not vigorous in the analysis of the film to put on the auteur straightjacket. The film *New York, New York*, illustrates the rich complexities of intertextuality of the film dialogue going on between the film

and whole Hollywood history. At the same time it also builds an internal dialogue within and between the different paradigmatic elements, genre, star and auteur.

Sudha Shastri in her article, “The play’s the thing, wherein I’ll catch the conscience of the king: Intertextuality in *Om Shanti Om*” (2011), writes that *Om Shanti Om* gives an interesting and stylish reading of intertextuality in Indian cinema. She calls it the best example of a postmodern film with ‘irony, parody, pastiche, irreverence and double entendre of the tongue-in-cheek variety’. Shastri explores the various intertextual treads that weave the content of *Om Shanti Om*. From references to earlier films, stars, dialogues, songs, stereotypes, to the social customs of the Indian society, the film has it all. The writer states that these differences diffuse the boundary between reality and illusion.

While these books give an idea of the intertextual nature of films and filmmaking, the following has been useful in relation to women’s cinema.

Alison Butler’s *Women’s Cinema: The Contested Screen* (2002) provides a theoretical understanding of women’s cinema. The book discusses various film theorists and their interpretation of women and cinema and looks into the common threads that bind women’s cinema at a global level.

E. Ann Kaplan’s *Women and Cinema: Both Sides of the Camera* (1983) looks into the issues of representation of women in cinema as well as films that have been made by women. The book provides a theoretical and critical perspective on women in cinema and cinema by women.

Mary G Hurd’s *Women Directors and Their Films* (2007) gives detailed descriptions of some pioneering women filmmakers and their work from the early days of film making to the recent times. The book looks into both the feature films makers as well as those involved with the documentary genre. Women started making films as early as silent film era. Women have made films of all genres ranging from romance, comedy to action and sci-fi. Women have made films not only for commercially inclined big studios but also ventured into independent filmmaking and documentaries.



Laura Mulvey's *Visual and Other Pleasures* (2009), provides a thorough understanding of the author's idea of 'gaze' and its application in studying and analyzing films. The book gives an understanding of the images of women that are conceived in the film screen. The book looks into the political and intellectual movements influencing the representation and reading of the female form on the film screen and the feminist intervention along with the issues of representation.

Geetha Ramanathan's *Feminist Auteurs* (2006), gives critical insights into women and cinema. The book looks into the works of various woman filmmakers around the world and discusses their identity in dealing with images and issues in their films. The book discusses how the women filmmakers have been able to build a different discourse in their films in contrast to the popular cinematic language dominated by patriarchal norms of narration and representation.

At the same time, it was also important to look into the Indian filmmaking scenario and the place of women in Indian cinema. Indian filmmaking has always been influenced by the diverse cultural traditions of the land. Sumita S Chakravarty in her book *National Identity in Indian Popular Cinema* (2011), while mentioning the use of myths in Indian Cinema, writes that the association of cinema with myth is not new. To quote Chidananda Dasgupta from the book, 'Indian myths are so great that they are capable of countless interpretations. In India, mythology often borders history' (Chakravarty 2011: 124). Likewise history has been recreated in commercial Bombay (Mumbai) cinema in spectacular forms. The stories associated with Maratha and Mughal history have been repeatedly invoked in movies; this evoking of the past has always been in sync with the collective memory of the masses. Chakravarty writes that the characters from the past reinforce the themes of patriotism and their actions are woven into narratives of romance, intrigue or conflict.

In *Indian Cinema – A Narrative of Cultural Change* (1998) Gokulsing and Dissanayake, ponder at the multiple dimensions of Indian popular cinema from tracing its beginnings to the influence of the epics and MTV on it. The writers

have also dealt with the distinctive identity of Indian cinema by looking at categories like race, ethnicity and class along with the styles and techniques employed. Writing about women in Indian cinema, they mention that women in Indian cinema are supposed to be embodiments of Sita of the Ramayana. The traditional norms that govern the life of Indian women can be traced in cinema too. They write that these traditional representations have often been challenged in the works of the women directors like Sai Paranjpye, Aparna Sen and Vijaya Mehta. The stereotyped images and concepts have been upset in the work of the women directors and they strive to bring forth a new narration of women's issues. In Sai Paranjpye's *Sparsh* (1979), there is a blend of a new cinematic style where the elements of popular cinema integrate with elite 'art' cinema<sup>1</sup>.

Subeshini Moodley in her paper "Postcolonial Feminisms Speaking through an 'Accented' Cinema: The Construction of Indian Women in the Films of Mira Nair and Deepa Mehta" (2003) writes how women in the films of Deepa Mehta and Mira Nair rebel from the typecast of their bodies. She writes, "by stretching the boundaries of their sexual identities, these women speak out in resistance through the language of their bodies" (Moodley 2003: 68). Moodley notes that Nair and Mehta subvert this concept of the Indian woman and who reclaim their bodies and sexual identities, which she attributes to their identity as diasporic filmmakers.

Jasbir Jain and Sudha Rai's edited *Films and Feminism: Essay's in Indian Cinema* (2009) presents an analytical discussion on women in Indian cinema. The book is a critical work on various issues of representation and women in Indian cinema. It also discusses films made by women filmmakers and their treatment of various subjects. In the search of a mass audience films often endorse stereotypical images and roles. It is up to the viewer and the filmmaker to cross over these issues of depiction, especially of gender, and come up with newer narratives.

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<sup>1</sup> Art cinema in India refers to the serious filmmaking trends in contrast to the popular entertainment films. These films are aimed at a more aware cinema audience and deals with various socio-cultural and political issues. Filmmakers like Shyam Benegal, Mrinal Sen, and Vijaya Mehta are some known names in Indian art cinema.

Indubala Singh's *Gender Relations and Cultural Ideology in Indian Cinema: A Select Study of Adaptations of Literary Texts* (2007) provides a discussion of select films adapted from literary texts. It looks into the gender relations projected on the film screen with reference to cultural ideology. The issues of gender, according to the author, can be understood only when placed in the related cultural context.

To analyze the works of the women filmmaker, it was also necessary to understand the various trends of film theory and criticism. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen's edited *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings* (1999) is a collection of various scholarly works on cinema, providing an understanding of various elements and discourses necessary to read and understand films. The book emphasizes the need to study films from a critical academic point of view. The early efforts to study films were to establish cinema as a form of art. By the 1960s and 1970s the study of films gained acceptance as an academic discipline and started borrowing from other related areas such as linguistics and literature, later expanded to include other dimensions such as psychoanalysis and gender studies.

*The Film Studies Reader* (2000) edited by Joanne Hollows, Peter Hutchings and Mark Jancovich, is a collection of various essays by film scholars. The book posits that films are a product of industrial and economic process directed at the consumer market. The ideas about film and authorship and the director being the 'auteur' is presented through the essays of scholars like Francois Truffaut, Andrew Sarris and Peter Woolen. These initial concepts about film art are further explored by bringing in the notions of stars, glamour, psychoanalysis and cultural studies perspectives.

The various philosophical traditions intertwined with feminism have given rise to the use of 'subversive' in forms of arts. Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity* (1999) critically examines the politics of gender within the patriarchal structures and urges to move beyond the confines of gender binaries for feminism to avoid building new hierarchies. She calls for

subversive performance of the gender roles within the system that generates them. Butler thus writes,

[T]he subversion of paternally sanctioned culture cannot come from another version of culture, but only from within the repressed interior of culture itself, from the heterogeneity of drives that constitutes culture's concealed foundation. (1999: 109-110)

The idea of subversion in film has been explored by Amos Vogel in his book, *Film as a Subversive Art* (2005). Herein Vogel explores how the medium of cinema becomes subversive variations in the use of the aesthetic, sexual and ideological canons to challenge the prevalent systems and traditions. Subversion in cinema occurs not only through form but also through the content or the narrative.

The theory of intertextuality gives the readers an opportunity to read and interpret a text from their own experiences. As we access a work we are not limited by its bindings but have the freedom to place it in multiple contexts. At the same time the theory of intertextuality also becomes a tool for the writer to make a political statement. As the books mentioned above pointed at the subtle and obvious intertextual references found in literary as well as film texts, I intended to trace those varieties of references in women's cinema. The women characters and their clichéd stories have been much criticized by film scholars. I wanted to see if the women filmmakers could break those clichés and stereotypes about women and their role in their films. While doing this, it also worthwhile considering if these filmmakers can make use of various references and try to give a subversive interpretation of the performances sanctioned by dominant discourses.

Though a lot has been written about the theoretical approaches to study films, and the feminist concerns of representation, there is lack of extensive study in the Indian context regarding women filmmakers. The study thus brings together the concepts of intertextuality, subversion and feminist arguments to study the works of three women filmmakers (Aparna Sen, Kalpana Lajmi and Manju Borah). It would be imprudent to assume that women have carved out a unique

filmmaking tradition of their own in India and to find exact replicas of the same model being used in different places. India is too vast and too complex a country for all differences to be reduced to a comforting similarity. Different contexts necessitate different perspectives. And yet, there are overarching parallels that emerge from a close reading of the films of these three very powerful filmmakers. If subversion itself is taken as the overarching connection, the uses of subversive strategies by these filmmakers provide interesting parallels and contrasts. Furthermore, in the Indian context, not many studies have been attempted to look at the way in which women filmmakers struggle to express themselves in a cinematic language that is already monopolized by patriarchy working in conjunction with capitalism. Thus I apply the ideas of intertextuality, feminism and subversion to study the films of these filmmakers. I believe that it is necessary to state here that my focus is on the political (feminist, in this case) use of intertextuality; in any case, it is debatable if an intertextuality that is shorn of political intent is intertextuality at all. The study also relies on the hypothesis that films as a system of signs is akin to language and since film is like language, it can be studied by applying some approaches that we use to study language (Monaco 2000: 157). Films comprise of images that function like symbols to narrate particular events and that communicate meanings. Film language is formed out of creative expressions and is not written down like words (Mitry 2000: 25-26). The chain of images has the potential to generate various interpretations of film language.

The selection of these three filmmakers for the present study is validated on the ground that they are all contemporaries and they have all been honoured with National Film Awards (generally considered to be the most prestigious in the Indian context). Besides, representing three different zones of the Indian cinema industry, their films reveal a pattern—concerned with social issues and themes related to women. Their distinct styles of filmmaking set them apart from ‘mainstream’ Indian commercial cinema. Since, the intent of the study is to focus on the textual analysis of the select films no attempt has been made to look into the biographical details of these filmmakers.

Going through women's films has been my passion and while going through the films of Aparna Sen, Kalpana Lajmi and Manju Borah it dawned upon me that they were doing things differently from the average filmmakers. This left me wanting to undertake a full length study of the works of these three filmmakers in order to understand how they articulate their difference from 'mainstream commercial' cinema. My discoveries were not dramatic; instead I found that the filmmakers in the study worked through subtle and indirect ways. I realized that these filmmakers spoke in a different language and my objective was to understand and interpret the subtleties of this language.

### **1.3 Objectives of the study:**

The objectives of the study are:

- To analyse if the films of the women filmmakers have a feminine language and thus to study the female directors' treatment of a subject in contrast to the prevailing stereotypes and myths
- To study if intertextuality can be a medium of subversion and how effectively it is used by the women filmmakers
- To analyse the use of other subversive strategies by these filmmakers

### **1.4 Methodologies/approach(es) applied:**

The study is a qualitative one based on textual analysis of the films. The idea of reading films as text elevates it from being merely 'an imitation of reality to an artifact, a construct' (Stam, 2000: 186). Christian Metz has explored the concept of textual analysis in films. A film is a product of varied choices available to the filmmaker. It is an amalgamation of multiple cinematic (cinematography, sound design etc.) and extra cinematic codes (theoretical or ideological inclination) (Metz 1974: 101).

The study looks into the various intertextual relations that are perceived in the film text. The concept of intertextuality propounded by Julia Kristeva has been used to study the films as intertexts. Further the study extends the feminist project of Luce Irigaray to build the argument about the need for a language

unique to women filmmakers. Auteur theory and Nancy K Miller's concept of the female author is taken to understand the marks of auteur in the films. Further, the study is informed by the concept of subversion of gender as traced in the works of Judith Butler and Amos Vogel's commentary on the use of subversion in films.

Primary data has been collected from the films of the filmmakers taken for study and secondary data from sources like books, journals, popular magazines and newspaper articles, internet resources etc.

### **1.5 Chapter-wise summary:**

This is the first chapter of the thesis. This chapter introduces the ideas that have been explored in the following chapters. The chapter also states the objectives of the study, methods (approaches) used along with a brief insight into the basic literature that has been referred to.

*Chapter 2* of the thesis is an attempt to locate women's cinema. Though women were involved with the process of filmmaking from the early period, there have been many socio-cultural deterrents that have constrained the growth of women within the film industries. Taking the American film industry, Hollywood as the reference for global filmmaking trends (since it is the most popular film industry in the world), the chapter also tries to trace the history of Indian women filmmakers. The chapter includes a short summary of the films of the three filmmakers that I have taken up for study.

*Chapter 3* deals with the intertextual elements present in the films of Aparna Sen, Kalpana Lajmi and Manju Borah. It explains in detail the notion of intertextuality and its connection with films and feminism. Films being one of the most recent of all art forms provide a vast landscape to borrow from. Through reference to various socio-cultural and literary texts, and other films as well the filmmakers endeavor to make a political statement regarding the issues that bother them. The study is done from the perspective that intertextuality in the films is not incidental or accidental but a part of careful plotting.

*Chapter 4* deals with the notions of subversion and its application by the filmmakers. The idea of subversion is to upset the dominant traditions. The filmmakers make use of the medium of cinema and use their narrative to provide alternative readings of the established systems of beliefs. There is an attempt in the films to question the social hierarchies and the rigidity of gender norms. They put their questions and forward their alternate reading through the very popular medium of cinema that is generally accused of being fond of status quo.

*Chapter 5* summarizes the study to conclude that the women filmmakers deserve distinct attention for their marked difference from the general filmmaking trends. In their effort to make way in the male dominated domain of this relatively new art form, they have also spoken for their kind. They deviate from cinema's popular intention of pleasure and entertainment to make political statements in the narratives. Thus, there is the emphasis to recognize the auteurial/authorial marks of the women filmmakers in the realm of filmmaking.

### **1.6 Introducing key-words:**

**Women's cinema:** "Women's Cinema is a notoriously difficult concept to define. It suggests, without clarity, films that might be made by, addressed to or concerned with women or all three. It is neither a genre nor a movement in film history, it has a single lineage of its own, no national boundaries, no filmic or aesthetic specificity, but transverses and negotiates cinematic and cultural traditions and critical and political debates." –writes Alison Butler in *Women's Cinema: The Contested Screen* (2002: 1). She further writes, "Women's Cinema is a complex, critical, theoretical and institutional construction, brought into existence by audience, film-makers, journalists, curators and academics and maintained only by their continuing interest: a hybrid concept, arising from a number of overlapping practices and discourses and subject to a baffling variety of definitions" (2002: 2)

Taking this view expressed by Alison Butler, I have chosen to discuss films made by women and call it 'women's cinema' in my thesis.



**Woman/Female:** The thesis specifically uses the word 'women' in context of filmmakers, characters or audience, instead of the word 'female' to avoid ambiguity in reading, given the fact that the thesis borrows heavily from various feminist criticisms to forward the arguments. The word 'female' implies that there is already an established tradition of feminist criticism that include the 'female' phase in writing where the women write from her typical and individual experiences. It also points to the fact that not all female writing is feminist in nature.

The problematic nature of the word 'female' has instead prompted the use of the word 'women'.

**Author/Auteur:** The term 'auteur' is used to refer to the creator or director or maker of film. The filmmaker would leave a mark, according to Francois Truffaut, and would resemble the person. That would not so much be autobiographical; rather they would reflect the personality of the maker. The auteur expresses particular creative imaginations through the cinematic medium that puts him/her at par with artists from other art forms. As opined by Andrew Sarris, technique, style and inner meaning of the film text could forge an auteur.

**Film form:** The concept of film form was explained by David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson in *Film Art: An Introduction*. In its broadest sense, the form is the total system that the viewer perceives in the film. Form is the overall system of relations that can be perceived among the elements in the whole film. Thus every component in the film contributes to its form. The formal elements in the film would include the subject matter as well as abstract idea, its content, stylistic element and the narrative. All working together make the film form that creates meaning and also exude feelings in the spectator. Form is the overall film with its content, stylistic element as well as narrative.

**Narrative:** By the term narrative, we generally understand the telling of an event, imaginary or real, through words or images. To apply it to films, narrative can be said to refer to the strategies, codes and conventions (including *mise-en-scene* and lighting) employed to organise a story. Distinguishing between

narrative, diegesis and narrating, Gerard Genette, says that narrative is the way and process to describe an event (Hayward 2000: 269). Wilkens, Hughes, Wildemuth and Marchionini, define narrative as a chain of events related by cause and effect, occurring in time and space and involving an agency and purpose pursued by the agents who are the characters or the narrator. These agents move along the chain of causes and effects to create the narrative.

**Gaze:** It refers to the exchange of looks that happen in the context of cinema. To theorise, Laura Mulvey provided an analysis of the gaze that cinema gives rise to. According to her, it is the male (character as well as the spectator) that holds the gaze (the bearer of the look) whereas women become the image or the spectacle. She said that cinema creates voyeuristic-scopophilic look i.e. pleasure to look at.

**Text:** A text an assemblage of images, words, sounds related to each other in some context and which is bound together with a goal of telling us something (Kolker 2000: 9-10). Roland Barthes has differentiated between the 'work' and 'text' and said that the 'work' is the tangible object while 'text' is the composition of meanings that arise out of the work. Barthes contested the idea of a complete text; to him the text gives rise to meanings in association with various symbols and contexts. The text according to him is not limited to a theological meaning but can be read in relationship with many codes and references.

The concept of text in films is applied within a smaller scale that it is a collection of images, sound, lights, camera, editing, landscape and characters that together narrate a story or an idea that can be read, evaluated and analysed with reference to other available texts.

**Space and time:** There is a clearly articulated relationship of space and time in cinema to create the impression of reality within a film. Various shots establish connections between the characters and objects to create a subject for the spectator. The chronology of the shots is maintained through time which follows in connection to space. Laura Mulvey has mentioned time as the editing and

narrative in a film, and space as the changes in distance and editing within the frame.

These terms have been used at various points in the thesis. While these terms have been defined and theorized by many scholars and critics, to avoid any ambiguity, I have tried to explain the connotation that they are supposed to carry in my thesis.