

From Subversion to Assimilation: Rewriting Feminist Horror from Lapachhapi to Chhorii in the Indian Cinematic Imagination

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Abstract

The rise of feminist horror in contemporary Indian cinema has ushered in a dramatic shift in the genre's politics of representation from supernatural spectacle to systemic criticisms of gendered violence. Although contemporary scholarship has noted horror's rising engagement with patriarchy, reproductive injustice, and female agency, less attention has been made to the ideological effects of transferring regional feminist horror to mainstream Hindi cinema. In this article, I investigate the Marathi film *Lapachhapi* (2017) and its Hindi version *Chhorii* (2021) by Vishal Furia to show that the shift from regional to national cinema is not only a matter of linguistic translation but also a reconfiguration of female politics through industrial adaptation. Drawing on feminist horror theory, adaptation studies, and literature on haunting and cinematic space, the paper introduces the notion of assimilative adaptation to describe the ways in which politically disruptive regional narratives are remade inside commercially dominating cinematic industries. The study, through a comparative formal analysis of landscape, mise-en-scène, sound, cinematography, spectral imagery, and representations of motherhood, shows how *Lapachhapi* generates horror from the collective historical memory inscribed in rural space, while *Chhorii* transforms this politics into a narrative of individual resilience and maternal empowerment. Instead of just condemning the remake as a poor copy, the author contends that it reflects a broader trend in contemporary Indian film, in which feminist critique is made nationally legible through processes of ideological moderation. This move from *Lapachhapi* to *Chhorii*, therefore, throws light on the way adaptation acts as a cultural bargain between vernacular political distinctiveness and mainstream cinematic appeal. The foregrounding of this shift in the paper contributes to debates on feminist horror, regional cinema, adaption studies and current South Asian film culture.

Keywords: Feminist Horror, Adaptation Studies, Indian Cinema, Folk Horror, Motherhood, Gender Politics

Introduction

Indian Horror Cinema Has Undergone A Remarkable Transformation In The Last Decade. Horror, often linked with gothic extravaganza, supernatural amusement and formulaic storylines, has become an increasingly crucial medium for tackling issues of gender, caste, domestic abuse, reproductive politics and historical memory. Movies like *Pari* (2018), *Bulbbul* (2020), *Tumbbad* (2018), *Lapachhapi* (2017) and *Chhorii* (2021) prove that Indian horror is no longer limited to scaring the audience with ghosts and supernatural beings. Instead, the genre increasingly locates horror in the social institutions that govern everyday life, revealing patriarchal structures to be more horrifying than the supernatural beings that inhabit film storytelling.

One such film is Vishal Furia's *Lapachhapi*, which holds a special place in the development of contemporary Indian horror. The film, in Marathi, is set in the agrarian environment of rural Maharashtra, and tells the narrative of Neha, a pregnant lady who runs to a secluded village for shelter, only to realize that the landscape itself is haunted by the souls of murdered female children. The narrative seems at first to follow the established traditions of supernatural horror. But the ghosts are not just scary ghosts. They are the horrific afterlife of female infanticide and they turn the supernatural into a potent metaphor for historical brutality against women. Horror is not the product of ghosts but of patriarchal society's normalization of systematic devastation of female existence. Four years later, Furia directed the Hindi-language adaptation, *Chhorii*, which retained much of the original story but was adapted for a bigger national audience with a major streaming release. The remake redoes a lot of the narrative events and visual features of *Lapachhapi*: the secluded sugarcane fields, the ghostly children and the primary problem of pregnancy. But the two films, in spite of their commonalities, have quite distinct ideological impacts. Conversely, *Lapachhapi* sees horror as an inherent state of being arising from the communal brutality of patriarchy rooted within the rural social framework. *Chhorii*, however, concentrates more on psychological endurance, motherly bravery and personal survival. This transition from provincial Marathi cinema to mainstream Hindi cinema thus poses a crucial critical question: what becomes of feminist horror when it is shifted into the industrial logic of national commercial cinema?

The article claims that the change from *Lapachhapi* to *Chhorii* is not merely a remake or grammatical adaptation. It is, rather, an ideological shift that rearticulates feminist critique within the norms of commercially viable horror.

Adaptation is an industrial and cultural process that alters not only narrative form but also the political meanings that circulate through cinematic representation. Both films condemn female infanticide and patriarchal brutality, but they differ substantially in their imagining of the relationship between individual autonomy and systemic oppression. The Marathi original places violence within a consistent social system maintained by collective quiet whereas the Hindi remake shifts the story towards individual resilience and moral salvation. Thus, the adaptation does not negate feminist politics but rather recontextualizes them in a form more palatable to general spectatorship. This difference is especially relevant when considering current Indian cinema. Historically, regional cinemas have been platforms of the telling of local histories, linguistic identities and culturally specific experiences that are often marginalized in national cinematic discourse. Hindi cinema, in contrast, often functions under industrial settings that require more cultural intelligibility and wider commercial appeal. As stories go from the regional industries to Hindi language production they are transformed not only by language but also by altering assumptions about audiences, genre norms, visual aesthetics, emotional affect and ideological address. Adaptation is consequently inherently intertwined with issues of power, circulation, and cultural translation.

This article offers the notion of assimilative adaptation to characterize the process. Assimilative adaptation is the industrial reworking of politically disruptive regional tales into forms that keep their thematic concerns but moderate their ideological impact for wider distribution. Assimilative adaptation, a different method than fidelity-based ones that measure adaptations by the degree of closeness with a source text, focuses on the changing of political meaning via alterations in cinematic form, narrative focus, and spectatorship. The term doesn't mean mainstream adaptations are inevitably without political critique. Rather, it suggests that such critiques are often reframed in narratives of personal resilience, emotional catharsis and individual ethical action, not communal structural change. This process can be interestingly traced in a case study of transition from *Lapachhapi* to *Chhorii*, as both films are directed by the same director. This continuity reduces many of the uncertainties often connected with remakes and allows attention to focus more carefully on the industrial and ideological adjustments that precede the transfer from Marathi regional cinema to Hindi mainstream production. The contrast thus demonstrates how shifts within the framework of production affect not only the telling of stories, but also the cinematic imagination of feminist resistance itself.

In this change, the portrayal of rural space is crucial. In *Lapachhapi*, the sugarcane fields are not merely settings in which characters roam about. They are vessels of collective memory, carrying histories of brutality that will not go. Again and again the view is blocked by dense vegetation, creating a spatial uncertainty that reflects the social opacity of female infanticide. The landscape is an archive in which patriarchal violence has been deposited over generations. Horror, then, is generated by geography's relation to history. Rural area itself appears haunting, having taken up unresolved trauma. The remake keeps these visual aspects but re-arranges their narrative function. While the sugarcane fields remain visible, they now function as atmospheric spaces that generate suspense rather than as historical landscapes that document collective brutality. The rural surroundings still has a terrifying quality, but it is of secondary importance to the protagonist's emotional journey. "Fear changes from historic embeddedness in social space to a psychological experience through individual perception. This change demonstrates how cinematic form interacts in broader ideological struggles of gender, memory, and social critique. In the figure of the ghost a similar reconfiguration occurs. In the *Lapachhapi*, the ethereal children are the history rural civilization has tried to unmake. Their haunting is less an act of revenge than a demand for acknowledgment of history. The ghosts reveal the impossibility of forgetting violence that is institutionally unresolvable. Their presence turns terror into an ethical confrontation with communal responsibility. But in *Chhorii*, these same spectral people increasingly enable the protagonist's emotional change, serving not merely as reminders of historical injustice, but also as catalysts for mother empowerment. Historical haunting turns out to be emotionally restorative.

Similarly, motherhood is ideologically positioned very differently in the two films. Pregnancy in *Lapachhapi* sits within a social order in which reproductive violence is not only a family matter but also integral to the community structures of patriarchy. The protagonist's vulnerability is not only from otherworldly threats, but from institutional mechanisms that control women's reproductive existence. Conversely, *Chhorii* slowly reconstitutes parenting as a domain of personal strength and moral agency. The pregnant body is still a site of patriarchal aggression, but the story stresses individual struggle above structural critique. This shift is symptomatic of larger trends in current popular culture in which feminist discourse is more often expressed in terms of stories of resilience rather than collective political revolution.

So, this article poses three connected questions: First, how does the transformation of *Lapachhapi* to *Chhorii* alter the political potential of feminist horror? Second, what is the function of transformations in the cinematic form—landscape, sound, mise-en-scène, cinematography, spectral representation—this ideological transformation? Third, what does this example say about the nexus between regional film, mainstream adaption and circulation of feminist politics in contemporary India?

Methodologically, the study integrates comparative textual analysis with close formal examination of cinematic style. The article does not concentrate on narrative material but on how framing, camera movement, editing, sound design, colour, performance and spatial organization create different political implications in the two films. Thus adaptation is seen as an artistic process in which ideological differences are made explicit on the level of cinematic form. This focus on formal analysis is a response to current trends in film studies that have encouraged scholars to look not only at what films depict, but also at how cinematic processes impact spectatorship and political interpretation.

The paper provides three main contributions: First, it re-conceptualises the remaking of Lapachhapi into Chhorii as an ideological alteration, not a language translation. Second, it develops the idea of assimilative adaptation as a paradigm for analyzing the reconfiguration of politically sensitive regional narratives in mainstream film industries. Finally, it shows how female terror in modern India is remade not only in narrative revision but in cinematic form, industrial circulation, and modalities of spectatorship. The paper aims to broaden the study of horror beyond Euro-American contexts and to highlight the significance of regional Indian cinema in reconstituting the political potentials of the genre by engaging feminist horror theory with South Asian adaption studies. Ultimately, the transfer from Lapachhapi to Chhorii shows that adaptation is not just the translation of stories from one language to another. It is a cultural negotiation in which histories, memories and political imaginaries are reconfigured for new audiences. Horror thus becomes a privileged place for understanding the preservation and transformation of feminist resistance in modern Indian cinema. The ghosts that haunt these films thus do more than simply scare; they reflect the continued fight over whose experiences are recorded, whose violence is validated, and whose feminism is made visible inside the national cinematic imaginary.

Feminist Horror, Adaptation, and the Politics of Assimilation. The current revival of horror cinema in India has led to renewed academic interest in the genre's ability to address issues of gender, violence and social inequity. Once viewed as a commercially marginal medium reliant on sensationalism and supernatural spectacle, horror has increasingly become a useful location for the examination of patriarchal authority, reproductive politics and historical trauma. Today's Indian horror does not only see ghosts as scary things. It often depicts them as symbols of social violence that has not been dealt with. This turn situates Indian horror within larger trends in global feminist horror, even as it demands analytical paradigms sensitive to regional histories, vernacular cultures, and the specificities of South Asian cinematic traditions.

Early feminist approaches to horror have tended to see the genre as a tool for the reproduction of patriarchal ideology through the depiction of female victimhood. Women, meanwhile, were largely passive objects of terror, punishment, or spectacle. Monstrosity remained predominantly masculinized. Barbara Creed challenged this idea fundamentally by suggesting that horror continuously builds the feminine itself as culturally threatening through representations of pregnancy, childbirth, menstruation, motherhood and the reproductive body. Creed employs Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection to suggest that the female body is monstrous not by virtue of an inherent nature but because patriarchal culture conceives of reproductive processes as unstable, extravagant, and resistant to symbolic control. The monstrous-feminine thus expresses fears not only about women as victims but about female creative capacity.

Creed's intervention is particularly pertinent to Lapachhapi and Chhorii, both of which are built around pregnancy. But they also extend her original statement in important ways. In neither film is the pregnant protagonist ultimately the source of monster. Rather, pregnancy is the condition which reveals patriarchal aggression. The horror is not in maternal embodiment, but in a social system that determines which pregnancies are lives and whose are cruelly ended. The films thereby transfer deformity from the female body to organizations that control reproduction. Patriarchy is the real monster, not pregnancy.

The move also speaks to Robin Wood's classic argument that horror stages "the return of the repressed." For Wood, monsters are societal symptoms rather than outside invaders. They are the vessels of histories, identities and desires that dominant society tries to silence, but can never totally obliterate. Thus horror is political because it exposes inconsistencies that are masked under ostensibly stable social arrangements. Though Wood established this theory primarily in relation to American horror cinema, his insight is especially valuable for understanding Lapachhapi. Here the ghost children do not break a previously tranquil social order but instead show violence already encoded into that order. The supernatural becomes manifest because the social has not acknowledged its own misdeeds.

A very Gordon's influential theory of ghosts as figures through which unresolved past violence continues to inhabit the present (Gordon, 1997), might further deepen this way of interpreting haunting. Haunting, believes Gordon, is not to be written off as superstition or fantasy. Instead, ghosts expose social linkages that official histories have tried to bury but that continue to impact actual experience. Thus haunting is a political situation when forgotten histories reemerge through affect, memory and material space. Through this lens, the ethereal children in

Lapachhapi are not so much supernatural foes, but rather historical witnesses. They ask for acknowledgment, not revenge, and turn horror into an ethical confrontation with lives that have been obliterated.

In the Indian context, these theoretical views become particularly relevant as terror has been traditionally associated with folklore, religious belief, village cosmologies and local memory. Where many Western traditions of horror tend to focus on isolated individuals who are facing supernatural perils, Indian horror usually places its fear in groups, landscapes and the cultural practices that are inherited. Ghosts are seldom disconnected from history. They are produced by unresolved social interactions of caste, gender, family, land and ritual. This means that horror often serves as an archive of collective anxieties, rather than just as a story of paranormal experiences. Lapachhapi is an instance of this tendency in its prolonged connection with rural landscape. The film continually refuses to divide landscape from social history. The sugarcane fields are not only gorgeous landscapes but places of memory, secrecy and violence. Dense greenery blocks view and uncertainty, mirroring the community's inability to confront female infanticide. Landscape is an active agent of narrative meaning. The nature recalls what the village wants to forget.

Recent explorations of folk horror offer a valuable way to think about this spatial politics. Adam Scovell highlights common traits of folk horror include remote locations, ritualised social rituals and belief systems based on local groups. This concept, albeit a product of analyses of British cinema, has increasingly being expanded beyond Europe to consider the role of rural surroundings as sites of historical violence and social dread. Folk horror isn't so much romanticising tradition, as revealing how inherited rituals perpetuate systems of exclusion and oppression. In Lapachhapi, the village is not scary because it is a preserved legend, but because patriarchal violence has been normalized through ordinary social life.

However, some caution is also needed in applying the label of folk horror to Indian cinema. Lapachhapi's rural Maharashtra is not only an Indian version of the European countryside. The environment of the film is molded by the region's traditions of agriculture, gender and labour, and local belief. Hence, this paper proposes the notion of vernacular feminist horror to account for the cinematic products where feminist critique is expressed through regionally rooted landscapes, dialects, and cultural memories instead of universalized genre norms. Vernacular feminist horror does not deny global horror traditions but refashions them via regional histories that can only be completely understood within their particular social contexts.

Lapachhapi is a perfect example of vernacular feminist horror, while Chhorii explores the specifics of adapting such stories to mainstream Hindi cinema. Here adaption is the key to the analysis.

Classical adaptation criticism generally approached remakes through the lens of faithfulness, asking whether they were loyal to an original source. Most modern adaptation theory has moved away from this concept. Linda Hutcheon believes that adaptations are actions of repetition without replication, whereby stories get new meanings in different historical and industrial contexts. Adaptation is thus a matter of reinterpretation, not reproduction.

Robert Stam also faults fidelity discourse for its assumption of stable originals, ignoring the dialogic and intertextual quality of cinematic alteration. Adaptations always have to navigate new audiences, new conditions of production, new aesthetic traditions and new ideological expectations.

These observations are especially applicable to Indian film because remakes often traverse not only linguistic boundaries but industrial systems as well. Regional films entering Hindi cinema do not only change language but they go to distinct spectatorships, marketing techniques and expectations of genre. Adaptation is consequently tied to concerns of circulation and cultural size.

However, the ideological implications of these economic transformations have attracted very little scholarly attention in the extant adaptation literature. The scholarship on adaptation acknowledges that adaptations change narratives, but fewer studies explore how the commercial growth reorders political critique itself. This article fills the gap by presenting the idea of assimilative adaptation.

Assimilative adaptation is the process through which economically dominant cinema absorbs politically disruptive storylines, while reconfiguring their ideological potency into forms amenable to wider circulation. It is not a process of censorship or erasing. Rather, it retains the visual evidence of political activity, while transforming the experience of politics. Structural violence is trauma on an individual level. Psychological development is collective historical memory. Institutional critique turns into personal empowerment. The vague political unease is exchanged for an emotionally pleasing narrative resolution.

This distinction is particularly significant in understanding the relationship between Lapachhapi and Chhorii. Both flicks vilify killing girl babies. Both expose the cruelty of patriarchy. But as the Marathi original frequently highlights the idea of communal collusion and historical recurrence, the Hindi adaptation increasingly foregrounds the personal perseverance of the protagonist. Feminist politics are still present, but they are now reconfigured around the emotional journey of an individual heroine.

This is similar to what Catherine Rottenberg has called neoliberal feminism, in which current feminist discourse is increasingly defined through notions of individual agency, resilience, and self-transformation rather than through

structural political change. Rottenberg does not argue that feminism disappears under neoliberalism, but that its political horizon is diminished by the emphasis on entrepreneurial selfhood and personal responsibility. This theory, applied to *Chhorii*, helps explain why the primary conclusion of the narrative is the empowerment of the protagonist yet the social systems that enable gender-based violence stay basically the same.

The comparison is not with the intention of glorifying the regional film and belittling the Hindi remake as just commercial. Such a dichotomy would flatten the complexity of an adaptation and miss the importance of circulation among wider audiences. *Chhorii* is an eye-opener for those who may never have heard of *Lapachhapi* but know of the issue of female infanticide. The increased visibility is culturally significant in itself. And therefore the question is not whether adaptation is good or bad, but rather how adaptation changes the political grammar through which feminist terror is voiced.

The theoretical framework established here so draws upon feminist horror theory, haunting studies, folk horror, adaption studies and feminist political theory in an effort to think transformation at the level of cinematic form. Instead than asking if *Chhorii* authentically reproduces *Lapachhapi*, the article explores how the remake reorders the relationships between space, memory, motherhood, haunting, and spectatorship. Thus adaptation becomes not a secondary act of copying but a main place in which the politics of horror are renegotiated.

The next parts develop this concept through a close comparative examination of both films, to show that the journey from a regional Marathi to a mainstream Hindi horror is an aesthetic, industrial and ideological transformation in tandem. The remake survives the horror, but it recalls differently.

Methodologies

The study is a qualitative comparative textual analysis of Vishal Furia's *Lapachhapi* (2017) and its Hindi adaptation *Chhorii* (2021). Instead of evaluating the two films based on the standards of originality or authenticity, the paper examines the ways in which the process of adaptation reconfigures the political imagination of feminist horror as the story moves from regional Marathi cinema to the more mainstream Hindi cinema. The comparison is therefore not a matter of evaluating which picture is aesthetically or ideologically "better," but of examining how cinematic adaptation reconfigures the image of gendered violence, motherhood, and rural patriarchy in different industrial and cultural contexts.

Methodologically the research is located at the junction between Film Studies, Adaptation Studies, Feminist Film Theory and Horror Studies. Film Studies offers the instruments for close formal examination of cinematic language, with particular emphasis to visual style, sound, editing, and spatial architecture. Adaptation Studies moves the focus away from fidelity criticism to how stories take on new meanings when they move over linguistic, industrial and cultural borders. Feminist film theory provides a critical lens through which to analyze the representation of women's bodies, reproductive politics and patriarchal systems. Horror studies, meanwhile, shows how terror, haunting and horror act as conduits for expressing social fears. By bringing these domains into discussion the article can consider adaptation as an aesthetic and ideological process.

Therefore, the study contends that the remake from *Lapachhapi* to *Chhorii* is not just a language translation, but a reconfiguration of feminist politics through new forms of cinematic production and spectatorship. The focus, then, is with the alteration of political meaning rather than narrative continuity.

Film Comparative Analysis

The main data of the study is a comparative formal analysis of the film. Rather than confining comparison to narrative events or thematic likeness, it considers how cinematic form itself generates ideological meaning. The study is based on several careful viewings of both films with the emphasis on the relationship between formal approaches and their political consequences.

The comparison is concerned with a number of connected cinematic features, including cinematography, mise-en-scène, editing, sound design, narrative structure, spatial organisation, colour palette, performance, symbolism and horror aesthetics. Cinematography is analyzed in terms of framing, camera movement, composition, lighting and shot duration, so as to analyze the effects of visual perspective on the spectator's participation with dread and vulnerability. The analysis of mise-en-scène is performed in connection to landscape, architecture, clothing, props and the structuring of bodies within space, demonstrating how rural surroundings become locations of historical memory and patriarchal domination. The investigation of editing and narrative structure examines how the pace, temporal organization and distribution of information create diverse sensations of suspense, revelation and emotional identification.

Sound design is another important area of analysis. In an effort to explore how each film generates mood and guides viewer response, the essay distinguishes between diegetic environmental sound, silence, ambient noise and non-diegetic musical scoring. Likewise, colour palette and lighting are examined as expressive elements of horror

aesthetics, revealing how visual tonality adds to various ideological interpretations of rurality, memory and violence.

Performance and symbolism are additional elements of importance. Special focus is given to the use of pregnancy, motherhood, ghost children, and rural scenery as reoccurring symbolic elements through which each film addresses issues of gender, violence, and historical trauma. In this work, cinematic form is not understood as a stylistic decision detached from meaning but as an active creator of ideology. Visual composition, sound, editing and spatial arrangement do not only show political topics, but they are ways of seeing, interpreting and feeling political issues. This focus on formal analysis enables the study to go beyond descriptive comparison and show how adaptation impacts political discourse through modifications to cinematic language itself.

Analytical framework

The analytic framework draws on feminist horror theory, adaption studies, scholarship on haunting and cultural memory, rural spatial politics, and studies of motherhood and reproductive politics. These methods are not used as independent theoretical models, but rather as complimentary viewpoints that reveal different facets of the films' engagement with gendered violence. Feminist horror theory offers a base from which to study the representation of female bodies, reproduction, and patriarchal anxieties in the horror film. Adaptation theory reconfigures the concept of fidelity to the ideological conflicts involved in the transfer of narratives across linguistic, industrial and cultural contexts. Building on scholarship on haunting and memory, I analyze ghostly figures as representations of unresolved historical violence, and theories of rural space explain how landscape serves not merely as setting but as a reservoir of social memory and institutional authority. Finally, discussions of motherhood and reproductive politics locate the films in larger conversations about reproductive justice, maternal agency, and the control of women's bodies in the modern world.

Rather than using these viewpoints in sequence, the article employs an interdisciplinary model of analysis in which these perspectives interact at various points during the discussion. The rural is studied as a cinematic place, as a historical repository, as an ideological terrain. Ghostly children are read as otherworldly entities and narrative devices, as representations of collective memory. Pregnancy and motherhood are examined not only as experiences of the character but also as political terms through which the power of the patriarchy is negotiated and challenged. This integrated framework allows the study to show that adaptation acts simultaneously on the levels of narrative, aesthetics, ideology and spectatorship. Drawing on feminist horror theory, adaption studies, and spatial analysis, the study argues that the shift from *Lapachhapi* to *Chhorii* is best read as a re-articulation of feminist politics through cinematic form. The framework offers the conceptual basis for the close textual analyses that follow, showing how changes in visual style, music, landscape and narrative organization reconfigure the political potential of feminist horror in modern Indian film.

Assimilative adaptation as theorized here is not confined to the traditional conception of film remakes as acts of narrative transfer or language translation. It maps out a broader ideological and industrial logic in which politically disruptive regional narratives are absorbed into hegemonic film cultures without totally losing their critical vocabularies. Assimilative adaptation is not accomplished through overt censoring or the deletion of difficult topics, but through more subtle aesthetic and narrative compromises that re-regulate the intensity of political critique, while retaining its recognizable surface. Radical interventions are not wiped away but rearticulated in ways that favor emotional accessibility, individual resilience and affective affiliation over collective structural conflict. Thus adaptation becomes a site of ideological mediation, where the demands of economic circulation, bigger audiences and national cultural intelligibility transform the political potential inherent in regional storytelling traditions. This is what transpires in the move from *Lapachhapi* to *Chhorii*, which retains the visual iconography of feminist horror—the haunted landscape, the spectral child, the endangered maternal body—but also reorients those elements toward a narrative of personal empowerment more readily digestible within mainstream Hindi cinema. Such transformations imply that adaptation is not simply a matter of what is translated from text to text, but how histories of violence, memories of marginalisation, and feminist criticism are selectively reconfigured to address new industrial contexts and audience expectations. Assimilative adaptation consequently provides a conceptual framework for considering the complicated conflicts that arise when vernacular political imaginaries infiltrate nationally dominant cinematic formations. The concept has broader implications for the study of regional remakes, transnational adaptations, and the circulation of politically engaged cinema beyond *Lapachhapi* and *Chhorii*, suggesting that adaptation should be understood not just as an aesthetic practice, but as a cultural process that simultaneously preserves, moderates, and redistributes dissent within changing regimes of visibility and consumption.

Conclusion

This essay has claimed that the move from *Lapachhapi* (2017) to *Chhorii* (2021) is not only a language remake or the repetition of an existing tale in a different film industry. Rather, the adaption is an ideological shift where the

political grammar of feminist horror is reworked as it travels from the vernacular environment of regional Marathi cinema to the more general industrial and cultural milieu of mainstream Hindi cinema. The study has shown that adaptation is not merely a process of narrative continuity but a site where meanings are actively negotiated, restructured and redistributed through the juxtaposing of the two films in their representation of landscape, haunting, motherhood, cinematic form and spatial politics. Hence, the transition from one film to the other exemplifies cinema's engagement in the ongoing reconfiguration of female politics in response to changing industrial realities, audience expectations, and forms of cultural circulation.

A central feature of this argument has been the idea of assimilative adaptation, which is thus theorised as a way of explaining how politically disruptive regional tales are absorbed into hegemonic cinematic formations without totally relinquishing their critical concerns. *Chhorii* does not undo feminist critique, but reorders it through a narrative logic that favors individual resilience, maternal strength, and emotional catharsis over the collective historical memory and structural critique that drive *Lapachhapi*. Still physically recognizable in both films are the ghosts, the landscapes and the maternal body, but their ideological purposes have been radically altered. The horror of the Marathi original is born of a landscape stalked by generations of patriarchal violence, where female infanticide is portrayed as a communal social crime, rooted in rural memory and institutional silence. In the Hindi remake, the same motifs are more and more used to support the protagonist's quest for personal survival and moral agency, a trend that reflects the larger tendency within mainstream cinema to articulate feminist politics in terms of individual empowerment rather than systemic transformation.

The comparative research has also showed that these ideological transformations are not just achieved through narrative rewriting but through changes in the cinematic language itself. Shifts in framing, sound design, mise-en-scène, colour, performance and spatial arrangement reconfigure the spectator's connection to terror, memory and resistance. Thus adaptation takes place on all three levels, those of aesthetics, ideology and spectatorship, concurrently. It destabilizes fidelity-oriented theories that limit remakes to problems of story similarity and locates adaptation as a cultural practice through which political meanings are reconstructed across language, industrial and historical contexts. In thus doing, it brings adaptation studies into constructive interaction with feminist horror theory, haunting studies, and South Asian film study, illustrating how formal cinematic choices are inseparable from the political work that films conduct.

More broadly, the article contributes to continuing debates on the question of the link between regional and national cinemas in contemporary India. It suggests that the circulation of films across linguistic industries is never ideologically neutral; it is symptomatic of broader negotiations around whose histories are remembered, what forms of dissent are culturally legible, and how feminist critique is made compatible with dominant structures of production and consumption. Mainstream adaptation does increase the visibility of socially important issues such as female infanticide and gendered violence, but it may at the same time recalibrate the radical potential of these narratives by translating structural oppression into emotionally accessible stories of individual endurance. Understanding this tension leads to a more complex conception of adaptation as a process of wider circulation of texts and ideological rearticulation.

Ultimately, *From Subversion to Assimilation: Rewriting Feminist Horror from Lapachhapi to Chhorii in the Indian Cinematic Imagination* shows that the politics of adaptation is inseparable from the politics of representation. The passage from subversion to assimilation is not a simple tale of loss or compromise, but a complicated negotiation where feminist horror is kept, changed and re-imagined at the same time. The ghosts that haunt these films, then, require recognition, not simply as supernatural creatures, but as persistent reminders of histories of gendered violence that refuse to go away. Their endurance shows that adaptation is not just a question of transplanting stories across languages and sectors; it is a question of reconfiguring how cinema remembers, mourns, and imagines the possibilities of feminist resistance in the modern Indian cinematic imagination.

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