

Exploring Psychoanalytic and Feminist Perspective in *Ghare Baire* with Ray's Auteurship

Asma Binti Hafiz

Lecturer

Department of English

Dhaka International University

and

Sumon Chandra Shell

MA in English Literature and Cultural Studies

Jagannath University, Dhaka

Keywords:

Performativity,
 Psychoanalysis,
 Phallogocentric
 Discourse,
 Misogyny,
 Antilove

Abstract: Tagore and Ray, the most powerful creators with pen and camera in the history of Bangla literature and Bangla film respectively, are blended in a single creation, *Ghare Baire* (1984). Although the movie came sixty-eight years after the publication of the novel, palimpsestuous of the book is alive in the misogynistic definitions of love and moral codes of a female. Here, too, female gender identity is defined only as an 'Other' in the 'lack' of a patriarchal social system. This paper aims at re-reading the film *Ghare Baire* by Satyajit Ray from Psychoanalytic and Feminist perspectives of Freud, Lacan, Mykyta, Cixous, Beauvoir, and Butler. It also explores the film theory of Mulvey and adaptation theory of Hutcheon.

Introduction

When Tagore and Ray, the most powerful creators with pen and camera in the history of Bangla literature and Bangla film respectively, are blended in a single creation, it must be beyond the expectations of the common audience. So is Ray's *Ghare Baire* (1984), a celebrated film adaptation based on Tagore's one of the most renowned novels with the same name. Surely, the gap of a half century, after the publication of the novel in 1916, calls for an audience of a different age, and, yet, an adapted product is always palimpsestuous in carrying the memory of the literary text (Binti Hafiz and Chandra Shell). Love and moral codes of a female at the end of the century remain loyal to the misogynistic definitions of the book coming at the opening of the century although the intensity is low. The movie, though, is named after the waves of the heroine's life inside and outside the boundaries of home; it represents the female protagonist from a masculinist point of view where female gender identity is defined only as an 'Other' in the 'lack' of a patriarchal social system. Even when the movie opens with Bimala's inner voice, it speaks in a phallogocentric language to define herself as a criminal for breaching the barrier set for her by the man's world. As the contemporary patriarchal discourse does not acknowledge Bimala's desire to be a revolutionary, she considers Nikhilesh's sufferings as the punishment of her participation in the Swadeshi movement. On the other hand, Nikhilesh, a promoter of modernity, though takes his wife outside, finally becomes pleased with her for returning to him in the bedroom. Unique to his age, Nikhilesh takes pain in teaching Bimala that her rights are only his rights by allowing her to explore the wide men's world. Instead of forcing the 'Ondor' on her, he arranges for Bimala to know that the outside world has more of servitude for her which

might be to some other men. In that, Nikhilesh is a martyr in the cause of misogyny to alter Bimala's rebellion into conformity.

Theoretical Framework

Psychoanalysis

According to Freudian psychoanalysis, a female's sexuality develops as a 'penis envy' that transforms into a wish for a man in adulthood (297-301). So, a female can never feel a completeness of identity in her own without understanding it against the male counterpart. For Lacan, the place of a woman is outside the discourse (34). So man cannot articulate what she is nor can they represent her (Mykyta). He can only represent his image of her that is repressed and silent like his unconscious (Mykyta).

Feminism

Cixous speaks about misogyny extended in women in her celebrated essay, "The Laugh of the Medusa." "Men have committed the greatest crime against women. Insidiously, violently, they have led them to hate women, to be their own enemies ... They have made for women an antinarcissism! A narcissism which loves itself only to be loved for what women haven't got! They have constructed the infamous logic of antilove." This clearly shows females are used as the tools for the farther suppression of females.

"One is not borne, but rather becomes, a woman." Beauvoir writes in her celebrated book *The Second Sex* during the second-wave feminism in the 1960s (330). It is a process of socialization to turn an individual into a gender identity. For Butler, "... Gender is not a noun, but neither is it a set of free-floating attributes, for we have seen that the substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence (33)." From that point of view, each and every female goes through certain rituals over their lives to naturalize femininity as their biological destination.

Discussion

If Freudian psychoanalysis is applied in Bimala's case, Sandwip declares her as an independent entity, beyond the shadow of her husband, because of her 'support' to Sandwip's movement even when her husband doesn't follow Sandwip. It indicates that, at the end of the day, a female can only become a shadow of another man even if she escapes her husband's influence. Later in the movie, she actually becomes a blindly acting doll under Sandwip's control who can only feel her safety and fulfillment in a man's arms, be it Sandwip or Nikhilesh. Sandwip on the other hand enjoys many women as he is the more complete one in the power play. This phallogocentric Freudian idea of a narcissistic 'self' is reflected in the mother picture of the country, too, where males are fighting to seize her from each other. Here, the desire to dominate is clearly the active force in instigating the boys.

Reflecting Lacanian psychoanalysis, Nikhilesh considers Bimala's words as the parroting of Sandwip whereas Sandwip suggests that she should not repeat her husband. There is no language for her that she uses as her very own soul's expression. Even when she expresses her inner thoughts, it represents the punishments and limitations, decided for women in an age-old patriarchal system with *Purdah*, *Ondor*, and self-shaming. As the patriarchal discourse is the very source of ideology, her desire beyond it is considered as sinful by the very female voice who would make the desire (Chandra Shell and Binti Hafiz).

Cixous's logic of antilove is evidently at play in Bimala's life. When Nikhilesh has both the affection of his *Bouthan* and empathy of his *Master Mashai*, Bimala only has hatred as a *Rakhashi* and betrayer from all the female characters of the movie. The females

including Bimala live in a system where they only learn to love whatever the males exclusively have that they can never access. So, Bimala longs for the revolutionary sacrifices. But, the exploring of the world outside, which is barred from the females, is only an extremely negative experience in Bimala's life which even becomes lethal for her husband and destructive for his whole state.

The process of 'becoming a woman' starts at the very beginning of *Ghare Baire*. Bimala learns as an adolescent girl that she is being the bride to an heir of a royal family. Then, the second time Nikhilesh's face is shown in the movie; it is in a photo where Bimala is sitting in a lower place than him. She feels fortunate in that lower position as she understands the family culture of banishing women to non-existence from her sad widow *Boro Jaa's* experience of waiting and being neglected throughout her short married life. She was happy with the confinement behind the locked door and long corridor, adorned with colored glasses, because of her traditional upbringing and ancient values. So, that is her process of becoming a woman who later speaks against her own emancipation.

Butler's theory of performativity is vividly visible in all the female characters of *Ghare Baire* as they develop their feminine psychology by nurturing daily rituals reinforcing themselves as inferior to the male sex. Whenever Bimala speaks of her opinion regarding the country, she has to admit her ignorance regarding the matter as a pretext. Even when she comes out of the home, breaking the family tradition for the first time, she cannot escape the practice of preparing sweetmeats for the great rebel hero with her own hands. Her role is buried deep inside her with repeated performance. On the other hand, although Sandwip promises to give up smoking if Bimala joins the Swadeshi movement, he, too, does not give up the culture unique to males. At the closing of the film, Bimala returns to her *Ontopur* while Nikhil moves outside in the world. Thus, her rituals bind Bimala to her gender identity.

Conclusion

Ghare Baire reflects the sexual differences between the male and female characters from a traditional point of view, and, yet, it is much less misogynist than Tagore's text. The film adaptation suits the larger and diverse context as Linda Hutcheon suggests. The reason behind portraying a more idealist heroine might be the time gap between the two works, too. Females' life experience is depicted with an entirely male imagination regarding the 'Other' by Ray. The movie, a huge business success, proves that the psychology of the audience is formed in a phallogocentric discourse where a female is always already guilty, and seeing her punished can please them by resolving the castration anxiety associated with her (Mulvey).

Works Cited

- Beauvoir, Simone. *The Second Sex*. New York: Vintage Books, 1989. Print.
- Binti Hafiz, Asma and Sumon Chandra Shell. "Postmodern Reading of the Film Adaptation of Tarashankar Bandopadhyay's *Saptapadi*." *Journal of Dhaka International University*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2022.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble*. London: Routledge, 1999. Print.
- Chandra Shell, Sumon and Asma Binti Hafiz. "Language and Psychology: Conflict between Mrs. Rawlings and Susan in Doris Lessing's *To Room Nineteen*." *Journal of Dhaka International University*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2022.
- Cixous, Hélène. "The Laugh of the Medusa." *Literature in the Modern World*. (1990): 316-326. Print.
- Freud, Sigmund. *On Sexuality*. Eastbourne: Gardners Books, 1991. Print.
- Hutcheon, Linda. *A Theory of Adaptation*. 2nd ed., Routledge, NY, 2013. Print.
- Lacan, Jacques. *Le Seminaire XX, Encore*. Paris: Seuil, 1975. Print.
- Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Screen* 16, no. 4, 1975, pp. 6-18.
- Mykyta, Larysa. "Lacan, Literature and the Look Woman in the Eye of Psychoanalysis." *SubStance*, vol. 12, no. 2, 1983, pp. 49-57. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3684489. Accessed 28 June 2021.