

**Representation of Male Gaze and Female Desire in Rituparno
Ghosh's movie *Chokher Bali*(2003): A Freudian Psychoanalysis
Approach**



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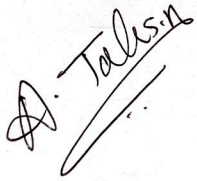
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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

I hereby declare that this thesis is the student's own work and effort. All sources of information incorporated here have been duly acknowledged. This thesis has been submitted with my approval.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Tahsin', is written over a light blue, textured rectangular background. The signature is stylized with a large initial 'A' and a long, sweeping underline.

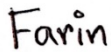
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DECLARATION

This thesis is a presentation of my original research work. Wherever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly, with due reference to the literature, and acknowledgement of collaborative research and discussions.



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Abstract

This thesis explores Rituparno Ghosh's cinematic adaptation of *Chokher Bali* (2003) employing Freudian psychoanalytic theory and Laura Mulvey's concept of the male gaze. It examines Ghosh's portrayal of repressed female desire, internal psychological turmoil, and the development of female agency within a patriarchal context. This study applies Freud's structural model of the psyche, id, ego, and superego, alongside his theories of libido, repression, and sublimation, to examine the psychological nuances of the protagonist Binodini. Her "sexuality and intense passions" (Chakravarty 104) exemplify broader themes of emotional repression within traditional society. Asha's psychological development is similarly analyzed. The research employs qualitative analysis through thorough examinations of narrative structure, character development, and visual composition. Laura Mulvey's male gaze theory illustrates Binodini's resistance to objectification, especially as "she tactfully changes the relationship around her, which destroys any existing relationships" (Nasrin 86). Moreover, the study contextualizes Ghosh's depiction with his personal challenges with gender identity, as evidenced by his statement: "I understand women because I feel a lot of their pain... their emotional repression, their longing. In some ways, I live it" (Ghosh). This thesis contends that *Chokher Bali* challenges female victimhood by combining Freudian psychoanalysis with feminist and queer perspectives. Ghosh views female subjectivity as a psychological negotiation within and against patriarchal power systems through Binodini's seduction, guilt, and withdrawal, and Asha's agency. This research enhances film and gender studies by offering an intricate psychoanalytic analysis of female agency and desire within contemporary Indian cinema.

Keywords: Rituparno Ghosh, Freudian Psychoanalysis, Structural Model of Human Psyche, Libido theory, Repression, Male Gaze, Female Desire, Female Agency, Psychological Conflict

Chapter One

Introduction

The representations of female desire in Indian cinema have traditionally been confined within rigorous cultural norms that glorify chastity, subservience, and domesticity. These dominant beliefs often restrict the intricate emotional and psychological experiences of women, limiting female characters to subordinate roles shaped by the male perspective. In this context, Rituparno Ghosh's *Chokher Bali* (2003), a film adaptation of Rabindranath Tagore's early twentieth-century novel, distinguishes itself as a transformative act of reinterpretation. Female subjectivity is emphasized by Ghosh's analysis, particularly through the character of Binodini, a young widow whose sensuality, intellect, and emotional autonomy are challenged by the culturally imposed perception of widowhood as an act of restraint and self-neglect. However, Ghosh's exploration of patriarchal repression is presented through the portrayal of female desire, repression, and conflict with societal constraints, provoking audiences to engage with the complex psychological experiences of women.

This thesis uses Freudian psychoanalytic theories, including the structural model of the psyche (id, ego, and superego), the theory of libido, and the theories of repression and sublimation, alongside Laura Mulvey's concept of the male gaze, to explore these complexities. Freud's structural model allows for a deeper understanding of Binodini's psychological struggle. Furthermore, libido theory highlights the importance of unconscious sexual desires through character behavior, while repression theory analyzes how these forbidden desires are either redirected through defense mechanisms or sublimated into socially acceptable forms of expression. Moreover, a critical framework is provided by Mulvey's male gaze theory to analyze how Ghosh's

cinematic perspective both objectifies and empowers his female characters, revealing the conflict between visibility, eroticism, and agency.

The principal objective of this research is to psychoanalytically examine the depiction of female desire, repression, and agency in *Chokher Bali* within a patriarchal framework. The objectives are to apply Freud's structural model to explain the psychological journeys of Binodini and Asha; to analyze the influence of repression and sublimation on Asha's emotional transition from passivity to self-assertion; to interpret the confrontation of libido-driven impulses within constraining social norms; and to examine how Ghosh's visual framing either reinforces or undermines patriarchal structures through the construction of the gaze.

This study is guided by two primary research questions: one is How do Binodini's acts of seduction, guilt, and eventual withdrawal in Rituparno Ghosh's *Chokher Bali* reflect the dynamic interplay of Freud's structural model of the psyche, specifically the id, ego, and superego? And the second one is, in what ways are Freud's libido theory and Laura Mulvey's concept of the male gaze incorporated into Ghosh's cinematic portrayal of female desire and agency in *Chokher Bali*? These questions arise directly from the research objectives and enable an in-depth psychoanalytic analysis of both character psychology and cinematic technique.

Ultimately, this thesis aims to fill an important gap in existing research on *Chokher Bali* by moving beyond nuanced feminist and queer analyses to offer a nuanced Freudian psychoanalytic interpretation. It suggests that Ghosh's depiction of Binodini's seductive strategies, guilt-driven retreats, and ultimate escape is illustrated by the psychological conflicts among the id, ego, and superego, whereas Asha's transition from submission to assertiveness is reflected by the mechanisms of sublimation and the reality principle. This study argues that Ghosh challenges

traditional portrayals of female victimhood by merging Freudian psychoanalytic theory with Laura Mulvey's concept of the male gaze, reshaping female agency as a continuous psychological negotiation both within and against patriarchal systems of power.

Chapter Two

Methodology

This research paper will focus on how Freudian theories examine the dynamics of the male gaze, female desires, seduction, and betrayal in the film *Chokher Bali*. A qualitative research method has been used, as the study is based on close reading and analyzing media texts, various research papers, and theoretical frameworks. The methodology used in this research is textual analysis, as it critically explores the psychological and cinematic elements within the film. This research paper also briefly summarizes the other scholarly articles that analyzed the film from different viewpoints.

This paper majorly employs Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytic theory as the theoretical framework, especially his concepts of id, ego, superego, repression, and libido theory to explore the protagonist, Binodini's character. Furthermore, Laura Mulvey's theory of the Male Gaze is used as a secondary theoretical framework to analyze how Asha and Binodini are objectified through the view of male characters and how Binodini manipulates the male gaze rather than being a passive object. Finally, the paper also investigates an authorial viewpoint, focusing on Rituparno Ghosh's own struggle with femininity and desires which influence his portrayal of female characters in the film. These theoretical frameworks are well associated with this paper since the theories employ an in-depth understanding of the characters' psychological journey, like Binodini's seduction and betrayal attitude and Ashalata's transformation, also focuses on Ghosh's identity in relation to the portrayal of female desire. This qualitative method enables a thorough and insightful analysis of the dynamics of the male gaze and female desire represented in the film's narrative.

Chapter 3

Literature Review

This study investigates Rituparno Ghosh's usage of Freudian psychoanalytic theories in portraying repressed female desire and the male gaze in his cinematic adaptation of Tagore's *Chokher Bali*. It further explores how Ghosh's own experiences with gender identity inform his representation of complex female characters who struggle with both societal expectations and internal psychological difficulties. The review engages with some scholarly interpretation regarding Binodini's active manipulation of the male gaze and her articulation of agency, emphasizing how her resistance to patriarchal conventions is achieved through deliberate seductions. Furthermore, it considers the analysis of existing research regarding Asha's character development from submission to empowerment, highlighting the deeper socio-psychological narratives within Ghosh's adaptation.

Chandrava Chakravarty's paper, "Relocating Tagore's Binodini: New Spaces of Representation in Rituparno Ghosh's *Chokher Bali*," examines Ghosh's depiction of gender and sexuality through Binodini's character, which directly fits with my thesis examining female desire and the male gaze through Freudian psychoanalysis. Chakravarty claims that Binodini's assertive sexuality directly contradicts traditional widowhood ideals, emphasizing her "sexuality and intense passions" as forms of active resistance (Chakravarty 104). Although this interpretation aligns with Freud's theories of libido and repression, as demonstrated by Binodini's intentional seduction of Mahendra, Chakravarty's analysis is constrained by its absence of Freud's structural psychological components (id, ego, superego). In lack of these elements, Binodini's nuanced psychological aspirations, especially her internal conflicts regarding moral guilt and societal expectations, are

only superficially examined. The article underscores that, "Although Binodini follows the strict religious observances of widowhood, Ghosh reminds us, through the patch of menstrual blood Binodini leaves behind in front of the prayer room, that no matter how much society tries to see her as a desexualized being, her body refuses to be tamed" (Chakravarty 104). This quotation is both visually striking and symbolically profound. Freud's theory of repression posits that suppressed desires frequently resurface unconsciously, as shown in this scene where Binodini's body instinctively opposes societal norms. Furthermore, Chakravarty overlooks a comparative analysis with Asha, whose transformation from passivity to agency has been examined through Freud's reality principle and sublimation. This analysis provides a crucial framework for understanding Binodini's defiance. My thesis specifically responds to these limitations through offering a psychoanalytically engaged examination of Binodini's psychological struggles, explicitly linking her seductive actions to Freud's structural theory, thereby contributing to scholarly understanding of Ghosh's complicated representation of female desire.

Similarly, the paper by Suparna Roy, "Women and Emotional Variabilities: Reading of the Delicate Complexes 'Subjecting Asha-Binodini' in Tagore's *Chokher Bali*", is offered as a queer-post-structuralist feminist study of the movie, where Asha and Binodini are presented as contrasting gendered subjects shaped by education, patriarchy, and desire. Roy's claim that "Tagore's women in these three works is therefore a boisterous displacement of patriarchal definition of what a woman is, yet has slight patriarchal tints too, but also resisting the same", (Roy 53) supports my thesis by emphasizing the conflict between conformity and defiance in Binodini's character. Binodini's seduction of Mahendra is driven by her jealousy of Asha's marital life, is reflected in Freud's libido theory, with her repressed desires surfacing in conscious acts of seduction. Roy observes, "Binodini's desire arose with letters but her entrance was opened with

Asha's friendship for her" (Roy 54), demonstrating how emotional intimacy evolves into sexual tension, thereby reinforcing Freud's concept of displaced libido. Furthermore, Roy's argument that "women as subjects of pity and objects of eyes have dominated popular cultures, including Bengali literature" (Roy 53) reinforces my incorporation of Laura Mulvey's male gaze theory, presenting Binodini as both subject and spectacle. Although Roy's reading offers profound feminist insights, it is deficient in a structured Freudian analysis of psychological defense mechanisms and Asha's transformative journey, gaps that my thesis addresses through a psychoanalytic study of repression, sublimation, and identity.

Likewise, in "*Chokher Bāli: Unleashing Forbidden Passions*", Kaustav Bakshi reinterprets Binodini's character not as a tragic widow but as a figure of sexual autonomy and rebellion, directly challenging patriarchal structures. He observes in the article that "Patriarchal discourses on female sexuality are acerbically challenged every time Binodini makes sarcastic digs at Mahendra during moments of physical intimacy that unmask the hypocritical patriarch who abruptly refrains from intercourse, much to her sadistic amusement" (Bakshi 4). The observation is aligned with Freud's libido theory, particularly evident in scenes where Mahendra is intentionally attracted by Binodini, while his reluctance in intimate encounters is simultaneously criticized. Although the article emphasizes her rebellion, it lacks how these actions illustrate Binodini's psychological turmoil: the id's drive for pleasure, the ego's deliberate seduction, and the superego's guilt, particularly evident in her eventual act of escape. Patriarchal dominance is sharply critiqued by Bakshi. However, his feminist perspective lacks the psychoanalytic depth required to explain Binodini's internal contradictions, her longing for pleasure interrelated with guilt, and the conflict between her desires and retreats, which this thesis explores through Freud's structural theory. Applying Freudian theory alongside feminist analysis, my research provides an

in-depth understanding of the psychological and visual dynamics of Binodini's desire, while simultaneously emphasizing Asha's contrasting development.

Additionally, the research article by Chakravorty and Kayal, "Feminist Messages in Rituparno Ghosh's Films: *Chokher Bali* and *Baariwali*," gives an analytical feminist exploration of Rituparno Ghosh's films *Chokher Bali* and *Baariwali*. Their exploration of female desire, subjectivity, and resistance to societal norms within Indian, particularly Bengali, contexts is highlighted here. The paper states, "Binodini's seductive sexuality is shown in Ghosh's film, which emphasizes the body as a social place including knowledge and power" (Chakravorty and Kayal 1304). This corresponds with Freud's libido theory, prominently portrayed in the film when Binodini intentionally uses gestures, clothing, and jewelry to catch Mahendra's attention. The article also states, "Ghosh unsettles the world of binary and heteronormativity and offers a biting criticism of patriarchy" (Chakravorty and Kayal 1311). This underscores how Ghosh's personal experiences with gender strongly influence his portrayal of women's desires and aptitude for independent behavior. However, The authors apply Auteur Theory to trace Ghosh's consistent feminist vision and Framing Theory is used to analyze how camera work, mise-en-scène, and editing construct narrative meaning and direct audience empathy toward female characters, the article fails to apply Freud's structural model; id, ego, and superego to decode Binodini's conflicting actions of seduction, guilt, and withdrawal. Furthermore, the authors neglect Asha's psychological evolution, which is essential for comprehending the narrative's dual representation of female agency. My research addresses these analytical deficiencies by employing Freudian psychoanalysis to examine Binodini's repressed desires and Asha's development, thereby providing a more nuanced comprehension of gender, power, and psychological conflict in Ghosh's *Chokher Bali*.

On the contrary, the article by Manjima Tarafdar, “Real to Reel: The ‘Third Gender’ Narratives and Queer Identity in Rituparno Ghosh’s Bengali Films,” analyses the films of Rituparno Ghosh, particularly *Arekti Premer Golpo*, *Memories in March*, and *Chitrangada: The Crowning Wish*, considering them as revolutionary contribution in Indian cinema for the nuanced portrayal of third gender and queer identities. A cinematic space for transgender narratives, influenced by personal experience and Indian cultural heritage, is established by Ghosh through his role as a director, actor, and writer. Tarafdar states in the article, “Ghosh was always unsure about his sexuality and gender identity” (Tarafdar 7), positioning his films as cultural representations of non-binary identity. The article focuses on queer theory and public discourse but overlooks the Psychoanalytical layers that characterize figures such as Binodini in *Chokher Bali*. My thesis addresses this gap by analyzing how Ghosh's identity affects his thematic selections and creates psychic tension in his characters. Binodini’s deliberate seduction of Mahendra and ultimate rejection of both male protagonists illustrate Freudian dynamics of the id, ego, and superego. While Tarafdar characterizes Ghosh’s cinema as a radical political endeavor, I believe that it is equally profound and psychoanalytical. Binodini's subtle resistance, reflected in her gaze and actions, mirrors Ghosh's experienced resistance to gender norms. My research employs Freud's Structural Model of the Psyche to analyze this resistance as not merely queer activism but as a psychological rebellion of male dominance.

Moreover, in the article "Tracing the Hues of Non-Conformist Desire Under the Dismal Veil of Widowhood," Anindita Sarkar explores how Tagore's two widowed characters, Binodini from *Chokher Bali* and Damini from *Chaturanga*, set an example of feminist resistance by challenging the patriarchal and religious oppression of widows in colonial Hindu society. Sarkar claims that Binodini's early trauma of being married to an ailing man at the age of twelve

establishes a psychological basis for her subsequent desires, asserting that she is “a potent and strong character shackled by the oppressive tentacles of patriarchy” (Sarkar 56). This corresponds with Freud's theory of repression, wherein suppressed childhood trauma reemerges as unresolved libidinal drives. The article critiques Freud's theory regarding hysteria in women and supports feminist alternatives such as Cixous's *jouissance*; however, my thesis proposes that Binodini's behavior can still be comprehensively analyzed through Freud's structural model of the psyche. This article favours for a feminist adaptation of female desire through Cixous and Irigaray, yet a substandard examination is performed on how Freud's structural model might explain Binodini's variable impulses, guilt, and ultimate escape. Therefore, Freud's connection is explained by my thesis by demonstrating how Binodini's libidinal impulses and psychological repression demonstrate her nuanced seduction of Mahendra and ultimate escape, rendering her more than merely a feminist symbol; she emerges as a subject of powerful psychoanalytic depth.

Furthermore, Farzana Nasrin's research paper, "The Conflict between Widowhood and Sexuality in Tagore's *Chokher Bali*", analyses the contradiction between societal norms of widowhood and the psychological truth of female desire. Nasrin identifies Binodini, stating, “She is a young widow with contradictory passions” (Nasrin 86), whose internal struggle closely parallels Freud's structural model; her id pursues gratification through Mahendra, her ego attempts to justify her decisions, and her superego insists on moral self-discipline. The article states that “she tactfully changes the relationship around her, which destroys any existing relationships” (Nasrin 87), revealing that Binodini's deliberate manipulation of male desire exemplifies Laura Mulvey's male gaze theory. Her seduction of Mahendra, which was ultimately rejected, is marked by her psychological agency that exposes underlying patriarchal bias. While Nasrin's analysis perceptively connects repression with agency, her paper could not address Asha's gradual

evolution into self-awareness, nor does it consider how this transformation fits with Freud's reality principle. My thesis extends Nasrin's analysis by applying Freud's structural theory to analyze Asha and Binodini, arguing that the film's representation of female desire is not only transgression, but also offers a deeply psychoanalytic meditation on inner conflict and the formation of identity.

Besides, the article "Subalternity, Agency, and Abjectivity: Unpacking the Liminal Lives of Widows in Colonial Bengal," by Ananya Chatterjee, explores a persuasive feminist-postcolonial analysis of widowhood, depicting women such as Binodini as "New Widows" who subtly oppose cultural destruction (Chatterjee 6). Through the lens of Spivak's subalternity and Kristeva's abjection, it is argued by Chatterjee that Binodini is symbolized by both social oppression and limited agency. The paper states, "The protagonist, Binodini, embodies the abject subjectivity of widowhood, her agency constrained by societal expectations" (Chatterjee 7). However, the paper reinforces the socially symbolic violence faced by widows but overlooks Freud's structural model, particularly the inner conflict between Binodini's id-driven desire for Mahendra and her superego's moral guilt, leaving the psychological complexities unexplored. Freud's idea of repression is reflected in the film by Binodini's deliberate gestures and purposeful silence, as the male gaze is manipulated by her to articulate and suppress her desire. Although Chatterjee relates literary figures to broader cultural tensions, the lack of psychoanalytic insight into Binodini's internal struggle limits the interpretation. The gap is sought to be bridged by my thesis by analyzing how Ghosh's portrayal of Binodini connects historical marginalization with intense psychological turmoil, thereby offering an extensive understanding of female desire, repression, and the intricate resistance to patriarchal dominance.

Therefore, the research article "The Gender Question in Tagore: A Study of The Home and the World and *Chokher Bali*," by Sumit Sharma, delves into how Rabindranath Tagore challenges

conventional boundaries regarding gender. He shows that Tagore presents characters who challenge traditional gender stereotypes of masculinity and femininity. Rather than conforming to fixed gender roles, these characters respond to their inner emotional and psychological drives. Sharma highlights how *The Home and the World* and *Chokher Bali* portray complex characters like Bimala, Nikhilesh, Mahendra, and Binodini, whose actions question the typical expectations of male power, female obedience, and loyalty within marriage. Tagore breaks traditional ideas about gender and gives space to women's hidden desires, especially through the character of Binodini. Sharma points out in the article that, "Tagore wrote about the predicament of the contemporary women. '... his women characters struggling against their dehumanization in the name of tradition" (Sharma 759). This supports my view that Binodini's actions aren't just about being rebellious—they also come from deep psychological repression, which connects with Freud's idea of the libido. The article also observes that Binodini is "an iconoclastic character" whose bold articulation of needs, such as when she asks, "Am I an animate object? Am I not human? Am I not a woman?"(Sharma 770), highlights her repressed sexual agency. In the film, this is shown when Binodini plays with Mahendra's gaze, especially during moments of intimacy, yet retreats to maintain control Sharma's analysis. However, fails to correspond thoroughly with Freud's structural model of the psyche, specifically regarding how Binodini's id-driven impulses are regulated by her ego and ultimately surrendered by her superego. Additionally, it does not examine Asha's psychological transformation through Freud's reality principle, which is vital to my thesis.

Lastly, Santanu Biswas's article, "Rabindranath Tagore and Freudian Thought," offers an in-depth examination of the evolution of Tagore's perspectives on Freudian psychoanalysis and its impact on his portrayal of complex psychological themes in literature. Initially, Tagore

questioned Freud's strong focus on sexuality, but later he acknowledged psychoanalysis as helpful for understanding deep human feelings. Biswas states that "the disjointed structure of unconscious thoughts may be employed in poetry if its employment is appropriate" (Biswas 724). The acknowledgment is especially relevant to my thesis regarding the portrayal of female desire and the male gaze in *Chokher Bali*. The complex inner conflicts and hidden emotions are reflected by Binodini's character, emphasizing Tagore's concern in exploring unconscious desires. The way she controls Mahendra and his gaze, particularly when she purposely attracts his attention, demonstrates a deep interaction between power and hidden feelings. Although Biswas thoroughly analyzes Tagore's connection to Freudian notions of the unconscious, he neglects to extend this examination to the structural psyche, failing to address how Binodini's desire-driven actions (id), her conflict with societal expectations (ego), and her eventual surrender (superego) illustrate a complex psychological progression. Moreover, his disregard of the male gaze neglects the principles of visual control and objectification in Ghosh's adaptation, a critical aspect that my thesis explicitly examines.

Overall, Rituparno Ghosh's *Chokher Bali* has explored various critical interpretations highlighting how Ghosh's adaptation provides a nuanced exploration of female desire, the male gaze, and psychological conflict through a Freudian perspective. Although Binodini is viewed by many scholars as a feminist or a symbol of resistance, Freud's structural model, id, ego, and superego, has not been employed by them to examine her internal psychological conflict. The evaluations by Chakravarty, Bakshi, Roy, and others recognize her seductive agency and critique patriarchal oppression, yet predominantly overlook the complex psychoanalytic dimensions that describe her oscillation between desire, guilt, and self-denial. The juxtaposition with Asha, whose evolution through Freud's reality principle and suppression is essential for comprehending

Ghosh's dual representation of womanhood, remains insufficiently explored. Feminist, postcolonial, and psychoanalytic theories are explored in my thesis to address existing gaps, providing a more comprehensive and psychologically nuanced interpretation of Chokher Bali. Moreover, the analytical framework is also deepened by an examination of Ghosh's gendered self as investigated in Tarafdar's work, which allows for an interpretation of Binodini's repression and rebellious actions as both personal and political. This research stands at the intersection of film, psychology, and gender, adding to existing scholarship with a decidedly Freudian lens.

Chapter 4.1

The Repressed Female Desire: Freud's Theory of the Psyche in Rituparno Ghosh's

Chokher Bali

Rituparno Ghosh's movie *Chokher Bali* (2003), adapted from Rabindranath Tagore's renowned novel, represents the emotional and psychological complexities of female yearning within the rigid sociocultural framework of early 20th-century Bengali-Hindu society. The movie revolves around Binodini, an educated and spirited young widow, whose repressed desires, quest for emotional connection, and pursuit of self-agency confront and disrupt traditional expectations of widowhood. Ghosh depicts Binodini not just as a transgressor but as a dynamic character trapped between her primal desires and societal norms. Ghosh's cinematic view provides an engaging access to the inner realm of a woman entangled in a psychological conflict. The director analyzes broader issues of female agency, emotional autonomy, and gender roles through Binodini's journey, all of which are intimately connected to psychoanalytic theories. This essay employs Sigmund Freud's structural model of the psyche—the id, ego, and superego—to examine Binodini's internal conflict and her challenge against repressive standards of morality. The analysis further counterposes her with Ashalata (Asha), the innocent and submissive wife of Mahendra, to demonstrate the idealization of traditional femininity. The analysis argues that the conflict between personal ambition and societal expectation demonstrates how patriarchal structure constraints and distorts women's identities.

To begin with, Binodini can be interpreted as a representation of Freud's idea of the id, which operates under the pleasure principle and is driven by fundamental desires such as love and sexuality. As a young widow whose marriage was short-lived, Binodini was deprived of the

opportunity to experience emotional or physical intimacy. In one scene, Binodini observes the intimate moments of Asha and Mahendra from the outside of their bedroom, which intensifies her repressed yearning. (Chokher Bali 00:43:18- 00:43:46). In another significant scene, Asha refers to Binodini as “Chokher Bali” (A grain of sand in the eye), a metaphor that symbolically presumed Binodini’s unsettling role in their lives (Chokher Bali 00:31:55–00:32:16). Binodini’s desire is articulated not only through verbal expressions but also through visual symbolism. As an example, Binodini's act of self-touch while observing the intimacy between Mahendra and Asha uncovers the depth of her repressed desire (Chokher Bali 00:44:08–00:44:25). Ghosh states, “I understand women because I feel a lot of their pain... their emotional repression, their longing. In some ways, I live it” (Gupta 2008)—reflects how his internal conflict with gender identity influenced his intricate portrayal of Binodini’s id-driven desires, which are shaped by Freudian id.

Moreover, Binodini's inner conflict is governed by the influence of the superego, which embodies the internalized values and moral codes of society that repressed her emotional urges. As a Bengali Hindu widow, she is anticipated to abandon worldly pleasures and embrace a life of asceticism. The extent to which she has internalized these expectations becomes especially manifest when Bihari declines her marriage proposal. With a tone of longing Binodini softly asked Bihari, “Do I have no right to love or be loved in this world just because I am divorced?” (Chokher Bali 01:44:15-01:44:20). This tragic scene reflects her intense desire for emotional acceptance and reveals the deep sorrow she carries due to the disgrace imposed by society. Although Mahendra's devotion to Binodini is visible, she is unable to accept the relationship without experiencing guilt. Following that, when Bihari proposes to Binodini for marriage, she declines the proposal, considering herself unworthy of such Affection. (Chokher Bali 02:14:18- 02:15:05). Director Rituparno Ghosh insightfully observes, “Binodini’s tragedy is not just her forbidden love but her

inability to reconcile her desires with her circumstances” (Ghosh 2003). Freud's theory of human psyche is reflected in his in Rituparna's inner struggle, wherein the superego binds the id to ensure conformity with societal conventions (Freud 15). Binodini's eventual withdrawal to Kashi serves as a symbolic gesture of the superego's victory, illustrating her choice to prioritize moral duty over the satisfaction of emotional and sensual desires.

Furthermore, Binodini's ego, which Freud identifies as the rational intermediary between balancing instinctual desire (id) and moral expectation (superego), constantly seeks to manage the conflict between the two rival forces (Freud 1923). She initially places herself in Mahendra and Asha's household very carefully. A significant moment occurs when she plays with Mahendra's curiosity by writing “Naphthalene” on a piece of paper and tactfully transmits it through Asha in order to reach Mahendra (Chokher Bali 31:00–32:10). Her actions are not impulsive rather intentional, demonstrating her ego's attempt to thrive within acceptable limits. Another key moment occurs when Binodini adorns herself in Asha's red blouse and jewelry, momentarily embracing a sense of femininity that society has restricted for widows. She expected from Mahendra to compliment her. However, Mahendra neglects to compliment her, instead responds that she looks better in her usual attire, which shatters her brief moment of joy and collapses her into guilt (Chokher Bali 1:14:20–1:17:00). This moment reveals the ego's inability to withstand the pressures of the superego, resulting in a state of psychological conflict. Freud argues that when the internal balance is disturbed, it often gives rise to emotional instability (Freud 1923). Binodini's impulsive decision to be involved in an extramarital relationship followed by her subsequent guilt, reveals as an apparent reflection of her inner turmoil. Her sudden departure signifies not merely a physical eviction but also a psychological resignation (Chokher Bali 02:19:25- 02:24:40).

In contrast, Asha represents the stereotypes of the ideal domestic woman whose desires are formed and align with societal conventions. Her character is identified by innocence and obedience, as she views Mahendra not as a partner but as a divinity to worship. According to Roy, “To Asha, Mahendra was not a friend, but a god whom she has to satisfy by obeying and serving” (Roy 54). Even Asha silently accepts physical assault from Mahendra, considering it as an expression of love (Chokher Bali 00:40:50–00:41:18). Her unwavering devotion and immaturity protect her from the psychological suffering experienced by Binodini. Mahendra's vacillation between Asha and Binodini underscores this conflict, while Ghosh critiques it by illustrating the emotional consequences for both women.

Nevertheless, despite her emotional transparency, Binodini experiences tremendous societal condemnation, while Asha, who conforms to conventional standards, receives sympathy and acceptance. The disparity between the two women highlights society's inclination towards conformity rather than complexity. Binodini's desire for love and attachment, conveyed through both nuanced actions and courageous decisions, poses a challenge to the patriarchal system that prioritizes silence and compliance. In spite of being betrayed by both her husband and closest friend, Asha's passivity and compliance secure her social redemption. In contrast, Binodini's intellectual depth and boldness lead society to view her as morally suspect. Through this juxtaposition, Ghosh critiques the societal framework that penalizes women not for any misconduct but for the audacity to transcend the roles they have been assigned. This disparity highlights how women's independence is often condemned when it challenges societal stereotypes.

In conclusion, Chokher Bali offers a nuanced psychological depiction of female desire and repression through the lens of Freud's theory of the psyche. Binodini's internal conflict, caught between her id's desire, ego's mediation, and moral restraints of her superego which reflects the emotional turmoil experienced by numerous women constrained by tradition. Asha's stark simplicity highlights Binodini's isolation and complexity. Rituparno Ghosh's personal experiences and artistic sensibility infuse vitality into Binodini's character, enabling audiences to empathize with her struggles. The movie ultimately critiques both individual choices and the societal framework that penalizes women for seeking beyond traditional norms.

Chapter 4.2

The Role of Male Gaze and Libido Theory in *Chokher Bali*

The portrayal of women in cinema and the consequences of that gaze have been a primary focus for feminist and psychoanalytic theorists. Rituparno Ghosh's *Chokher Bali* (2003), adapted from Rabindranath Tagore's novel, presents an insightful exploration of gendered desire and agency in colonial Bengal. The film investigates the complexities of repression, observation, and metamorphosis through the characters of Binodini and Asha. This chapter integrates Laura Mulvey's male gaze theory and Sigmund Freud's libido theory as the primary analytical frameworks. The analysis demonstrates how female characters are influenced by and oppose male-dominated viewpoints, while also highlighting how repressed desire manifests in nuanced psychological behaviors. Furthermore, this paper carefully balances Tagore's original literary vision with Ghosh's directorial viewpoint, highlighting how Ghosh reevaluates female agency through cinematic language and his own gender identity viewpoint.

To begin with, Laura Mulvey's concept of the male gaze, proposed in her pioneering essay, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975), provides a key framework for interpreting how women are positioned as passive objects within the visual structures shaped by patriarchal ideology. Mulvey asserts, "pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female" (Mulvey 808). In *Chokher Bali*, Binodini—depicted by the stunning Aishwarya Rai—is instantly established as an object of visual attraction through the perspectives of the characters and the camera's framing. A crucial scene in which Binodini assists Asha in wearing a blouse is captured through close-up shots that highlight her sensual gestures (*Chokher Bali* 00:41:40–00:42:23). The film's composition aligns the audience with Mahendra's viewpoint,

portraying Binodini as an erotic spectacle. Tagore's novel depicts Binodini as intellectually and emotionally complex, whereas Ghosh amplifies her sensuality through visual narrative.

Transitioning to the characters, Mahendra's gaze mirrors Mulvey's argument that he keeps alternating between idealizing and objectifying women according to their ability to meet his desires, thereby reinforcing the visual dichotomy between active/male and passive/female subjects (Mulvey 808). Asha is initially adored by Mahendra as an obedient, submissive partner, praised for her simplicity and attractiveness. However, Mahendra's attention begins to waver the moment Binodini enters into the household, characterized by her intellect and maturity. He is captivated by her sophistication and boldness thus observes that Binodini's presence has displaced all emotions from his heart. Ghosh reinforces this transformation through visual indicators: Mahendra's prolonged gazes, the passionate silences, and his increasing disregard for Asha. This progression illustrates Freud's concept that unconscious desire frequently pursues new objects of gratification after the previous ones have been exhausted (Freud 27). Binodini symbolizes Mahendra's fantasy, a desire that is simultaneously visual and libidinous. As his fascination with Binodini intensifies, his treatment towards Asha gradually shifts from affectionate engagement to emotional detachment, which reveals how perception changes into emotional hierarchy. This is evident in a particular scene where Asha conveys a desire for intimacy, yet Mahendra shows a clear lack of interest, disclosing a split in their marital relationship (Chokher Bali 01:13:00 - 01:13:28).

In contrast, Bihari presents a morally grounded and emotionally mature gaze. Despite acknowledging the allure of both Asha and Binodini, he refrains from objectifying them. Bihari's gaze, in contrast to Mahendra's, is characterized by moral and emotional depth. For example, when he proposes marriage to Binodini, it is motivated not by desire but by an appreciation of her intellect and courage (Chokher Bali 02:14:16- 02:14:15). In spite of her detachment from

Mahendra, Bihari's reaction is identified by sorrow rather than revenge, reflecting generosity over possessiveness. Ghosh conveys this distinction through his use of lighting and spatial arrangement; Bihari is often portrayed isolated during introspective moments, visually framed by windows or doorways, embodying a reflective, introspective masculinity (Chokher Bali 01:13:30- 01:13:38). His gaze acknowledges the agency of women, presents a different view of male behaviour that respects rather than exerts dominance over the female presence. In this context, Bihari embodies what Mulvey characterizes as a "non-voyeuristic" gaze, one that challenges the objectification of women as mere subjects of male visual pleasure (Mulvey 815).

Furthermore, Freud's libido theory provides understanding of Binodini's psychological conflict and deviant behaviors. Freud defined libido as the psychic energy of desire, which, when suppressed, may result in neurosis or subversive behaviors (Freud 217). Binodini, a widow bound by rigorous codes of chastity, is deprived of sexual expression. Her early marriage and her husband's unexpected demise deprived her from the physical intimacy of conjugal life. This unfulfilled desire remains repressed until it manifests through Mahendra. Her seductive behaviour unfolds gradually—initially emotional, eventually turns into physical, which symbolizes the shift from repression to expression. Binodini's voyeuristic obsession with Asha and Mahendra's intimate life serves as a captivating metaphor. In a particular scene, she inquires about Asha's intimate relationship with Mahendra, her expression highlighted by a blend of curiosity and yearning (Chokher Bali 00:40:24–00:40:37). Freud's pleasure principle, which asserts that individuals are motivated to pursue pleasure and dodge pain, is manifest in this context—Binodini's actions are not merely romantic but libidinal, an endeavor to achieve repressed instincts within socially permissible limits before they ultimately surface (Freud 7).

Meanwhile, Ghosh allows Binodini to control the gaze. She is not only observed; she also organizes and controls her perception. Her deliberate gestures, application of ornamentation, and seduction with Bihari in Mahendra's presence illustrate this control. (Chokher Bali 01:15:30-01:15:36). In a significant scene, Binodini takes a jewelry piece from Asha that was given by Bihari, however, Mahendra noticing that, responds with visible jealousy, revealing his possessiveness and emotional insecurity toward Binodini's growing connection with Bihari (Chokher Bali 01:18:16–01:19:00). This calculated manipulation of male desire corresponds with Mulvey's assertion that women can subvert patriarchal spectatorship via performativity (Mulvey 811). In these instances, Ghosh enhances Tagore's literary perspective by emphasizing female agency through visual and narrative nuances.

However, the emotional impacts of Binodini's libido-driven actions mostly affect Asha. Asha, once naive and trusting, is profoundly affected by her husband's and closest friend's deceit. Her emotional journey sets an example of psychological evolution, from naivety to awakening. Ghosh illustrates this evolution through an increasing narrative focus, Asha passes from the background to the foreground, asserting both visual and narrative prominence. Her refusal of Mahendra's return is depicted as a moment of ethical clarity and self-esteem, consistent with Freud's secondary process, where the ego postpones gratification for long-term prosperity (Freud 10). Asha's evolution contrasts with Binodini's downfall; one is elevated by emotional resilience, while the other is submerged by regret and deprivation. This dual journey emphasises Ghosh's assertion that female agency manifests in various forms, via rebellion or introspection, and must be comprehended through both psychological and social lenses (Chakravorty and Kayal 1298).

To conclude, Chokher Bali provides a rich and multifaceted exploration into the intersections of desire, power, and gender identity. Laura Mulvey's theory of the male gaze reveals

how women are situated within and in resistance to the patriarchal system that governs visual authority. Freud's libido theory further enriches this paper by uncovering the psychological effects of suppressing women of their sexual and emotional independence. Rituparno Ghosh, expanding upon Tagore's foundation, enhances these frameworks by incorporating cinematic intricacies and his own perspectives on gender and desire. By emphasizing Binodini's influence over perception and Asha's moral awakening, the movie examines traditional roles and redefines the potential of female subjectivity. Ultimately, *Chokher Bali* not only portrays a tale of mere betrayal but also serves as a poignant critique of women's navigation of visibility, repression, and transformation within a society that seeks to constrain them.

Chapter 4.3

Reflection of Rituparno Ghosh's Personal Lens in *Chokher Bali*

In the landscape of Indian cinema, few directors dare to merge their personal struggle with identity into their work as Rituparno Ghosh. Ghosh, a renowned Bengali filmmaker, was openly gender-fluid and questioned societal conventions in both his life and cinematic works. His cinematic adaptation of Rabindranath Tagore's novel *Chokher Bali* (2003) sets an example of a compelling example of the intersection between the personal and the visual storytelling. The narrative centers on Binodini, a young widow navigating the emotional landscape of early 20th-century Bengal, whose yearning, isolation, and emotional intricacies drive the narrative. Ghosh's personal journey with gender and identity forms the portrayal of Binodini on screen, presenting her as a woman who challenges conventional patriarchal norms and navigates a transitional social space similar to the director's own journey. This chapter analyzes the reflection of Ghosh's personal struggles with gender identity in Binodini's character. In doing so, this shows a cohesive interaction between biographical cognition and cinematic depiction, wherein Binodini's suppressed desires, isolation, and internal conflicts reflect Ghosh's quest for identity and validation. Ultimately, Ghosh's personal viewpoint transforms Binodini from a mere literary figure into a cinematic embodiment of the director's own quest for identity and defiance.

Rituparno Ghosh was simultaneously a filmmaker and a queer role model, who openly accepted gender fluidity within the conventional setting like Indian society. In interviews, he shared his experiences of existing "in between" genders and resisting the binary classifications of male and female. "I consider myself privileged because of my gender fluidity, the fact that I am in between," (Ghosh). He disregarded the idea of desiring to become a woman, yet explicitly

embraced feminine clothing and behaviors. “I don’t consider myself a woman and I don’t want to become a woman. I can wear kurta pyjama and direct a film; I can also wear kajal and jewellery and attend a social do... My point is why shouldn’t I celebrate my sexuality?” (Ghosh). It defends his decision to challenge gender norms. Ghosh intentionally occupied an ambiguous gender space: “I’ll not wear any gender-determining attire, neither sari nor dhoti-kurta... I shall always go for something in between. That’s the best way of celebrating gender fluidity,” (Ghosh), he stated to interviewer Kaustav Bakshi that this is the optimal method for celebrating gender fluidity. The acceptance of ambiguity and resistance to rigid norms significantly influenced Ghosh's artistic view.

Ghosh's dynamic identity provided him with a distinctive creative perspective that was often characterized as a "female gaze" in his films (Ghosh). Described as “born man but dreaming woman” (Ghosh), he was attuned to the inner experiences of his female characters and compassionate towards those marginalized by patriarchy. His works are usually focused on dynamic female characters and challenge gender roles. Ghosh depicted his position as “anti-patriarchal,” expressing a fascination with vulnerability within oppressive power structures. This personal perspective enabled him to depict characters such as Binodini not as stereotypes, but as fully developed individuals confronting societal constraints. Ghosh's personal exploration of identity, which defies binary classification of masculinity or femininity, mirrors Binodini's struggle against the rigorous roles assigned to typical widows. With this personal perspective, Ghosh approached *Chokher Bali* resolute in his intention to articulate Binodini’s suppressed desires and frustrations. In an interview, he expressed that he felt no obligation to adhere to Tagore's original narrative, but rather to its essence (Ghosh). For Ghosh, that spirit required exposing Binodini's autonomy and intrinsic reality in a manner that reflected his own realism.

The most visible connection between Ghosh's personal experience and Binodini's character is in the portrayal of desire. In the context of colonial Bengali society, depicted in the film, a young widow's sexual yearnings were socially unacceptable, which mirrors the marginalization of gender diverse desires in Ghosh's contemporary society that Rituparno Ghosh experienced. Ghosh identified with this repression and courageously highlighted Binodini's "forbidden passion" (Ghosh). In contrast to Tagore, who suppressed Binodini's erotic tale due to societal constraints (Ghosh), Ghosh "unhesitatingly explores the dimension of passion in Binodini's life" on screen (Mukherjee 1). He provides Binodini's interactions with Mahendra with a prominent erotic undertone, ignoring the portrayal of her desire as sinful or shameful. This appears clearly in the renowned "opera glasses scene" (Chokher Bali 01:12:40-01:13:00).

In that scene, Binodini secretly observes the newlywed couple, Asha and Mahendra, through a pair of opera glasses as they engage in intimate moments (Chokher Bali 01:12:40-01:13:00). Ghosh's camera deliberately moves between close-ups of Binodini's solitary eye behind the lens and the couple's view from their viewpoint. In doing so, the movie places the audience in Binodini's perspective, justifying her gaze instead of condemning it. What is notable, as one analysis observes, is how this reverses the conventional cinematic dynamic, "Typically, it's the male characters who are given the power to observe... Here, it's Binodini, a widow who by the social norms of early 20th century Bengal should be invisible, but becomes the observer with agency and subjectivity"(Ghosh). Under Ghosh's direction, Binodini asserts both literally and metaphorically her claim to the gaze. Her expression is saturated with yearning and fascination – a "mixture of curiosity, longing, and perhaps a hint of mischief" – expressing her intricate desire silently (Ghosh). This compassionate portrayal of a widow's longing reflects Ghosh's stance for

the recognition and validation of unconventional desire, rather than its avoidance. As Ghosh inquired of society, “Why shouldn’t I celebrate my sexuality?” (Ghosh). Binodini too is allowed to “celebrate her sexuality according to her own terms.

In addition to observing through opera glasses, Binodini vigorously seeks her aspirations in manners which surprise her society – a subtle insurrection that Ghosh evidently endorses. She embarks on a passionate affair with Mahendra, rejecting the notion of denying the "deprived sexuality" of a widow (Ghosh). In a particular intimate scene, Binodini is depicted adorned in a red shawl – a purposeful directorial decision by Ghosh (Chokher Bali 02:08:05- 02:08:50). He selected red as a motif for Binodini to represent both passion and revolution. A widow adorned in red, symbolizing sindoor and bridal attire, provides a subversive representation; Ghosh enhances this notion by employing the shawl to signify Binodini’s defiance against the monotonous existence imposed upon her. As Binodini and Mahendra share secretive glimpses and ultimately embrace, Ghosh’s camera highlights Binodini’s sensual awakening rather than objectifying her. This corresponds with the "female gaze" perspective: her desire is depicted according to her own standards, rather than through the objectifying viewpoint of a male director (Ghosh). Ghosh's personal identification as an outsider lends authenticity to these scenes; he comprehends the significance of transgressing norms for love. He stated that art served as his activism, asserting that portraying queer relationships on screen constituted “an expression of my activism,” despite possibly alienating certain viewers (Ghosh). Similarly, granting Binodini with assertive sexual agency serves Ghosh's purpose of subtly introducing a feminist and queer-affirming narrative within a historical drama. Binodini's disruptive desires, similar to Ghosh's, are not subjected to moral judgment by the film; rather, they are depicted as fundamental human longing prevented by a repressive society. This compassionate coordination encourages the audience to understand, and

even support, Binodini's quest for love and significance—an empathy derived from Ghosh's profound personal insight into forbidden desire.

Alongside desire, the theme of loneliness emerges as a theme that mirrors Binodini's experiences and Ghosh's personal reality. In *Chokher Bali*, Binodini is depicted as a widow in her early twenties, living in near seclusion. During that period, widowhood symbolized isolation and social demise; “Widowhood is all about seclusion and loneliness and the character of Binodini is all about debunking and shattering the myths related to widowhood” (Raj 187). Ghosh's film emphasizes that Binodini, despite her education and youthfulness, is confined to the margins – a circumstance with which Ghosh, as a queer individual frequently marginalized, relates. In one scene, Ghosh competently illustrates Binodini's feeling of isolation during a usual domestic ritual. Ashalata (Asha), the young bride of the household, is cleansing her face and requests water to remove soap and the excess sindoor (the red vermilion powder denoting a married woman's status). Binodini, holding the water, pauses intentionally and retains it for a brief interval, allowing Asha to struggle with her eyes shut. A nuanced "wicked smile" crosses Binodini's face (*Chokher Bali* 00:45:34- 00:46:13). At first glance, it appears to be a minor cruel mockery, yet it carries significant consequences. According to Srimati Mukherjee, Binodini exists in a realm where all desirable elements are denied to her, despite her youth and exceptional beauty; her actions can be interpreted as an effort “to draw the pampered wife into that unredeemed zone of denial that was the widow's reality” (Mukherjee 1). In essence, Binodini momentarily shares her isolation and deficiencies with Asha, conveying in her the sense of powerlessness and frustration experienced by a widow. Ghosh adeptly frames this scene, placing Asha at the center with her face obscured by soap, while Binodini is positioned to the side, her face fully visible (Mukherjee 1). By focusing on the widow's emotional experience, Ghosh encourages the viewer to engage with Binodini's

isolation. This directorial decision stems from Ghosh's personal experience of existing in a society which often attempted to marginalize him.

Rituparno Ghosh thoroughly understood the sensation of being socially present yet overlooked – similar to a widow in a festive household. Despite his fame, he often sensed that individuals did not entirely embrace or comprehend him. He also mentioned that relationships evaded him as others were intimidated by his persona, suggesting a concealed loneliness beneath his public recognition (Ghosh). In the film, Binodini's most profound connection is with Asha – a friend she truly cherishes – yet even within that friendship, she remains fundamentally isolated, incapable of revealing her most essential emotions like, her sorrow and aspirations. Following the exposure of her affair with Mahendra, Binodini is swiftly cast out, confirming her most profound fear—being condemned to a life of isolation. The film's concluding act underscores this isolation: Binodini resolves to depart from Calcutta completely. In Ghosh's adaptation, she does not willingly marry Behari. Instead, she develops an autonomous trajectory, departing solitary with merely her reflections expressed in a letter (Chokher Bali 02:19:30- 02:20:00). This conclusion markedly departs from the novel, which Ghosh selected to emphasize that “In today’s time, I think a woman can live on her own completely... She does not require a male surname, or title, or an appendage of any kind to help her lead her life” (Ghosh). Binodini's solitude thus transforms into a conscious, empowering decision rather than merely a regretful destiny. In that decision, one perceives Ghosh’s voice: the filmmaker who prefers authenticity and solitude over the deception of societal validation. “our identities are subject to the body which again is a boundary... I believe in transcending that boundary... the body is in a state of transition, perennially... so, is my identity” (Ghosh). This philosophy of embracing an individual journey beyond traditional limits is precisely what Binodini represents in the ending. She transcends the roles assigned to her to establish an

identity defined by her own essence, apart of any male influence or societal classification – a quest that Ghosh perpetually pursued in his own life.

In conclusion, *Chokher Bali* transcends the boundaries of a conventional period drama, emerging as a thoroughly developed personal cinematic narrative where Rituparno Ghosh reflects his own essence through the character of Binodini as a reflective figure. This chapter illustrates Binodini's longing for love, deep solitude, and her ultimate self-assertion mirrors Ghosh's own struggles with gender and identity as reflected in Utilizing Ghosh's interviews and writings, one observes a filmmaker who existed "in between" genders and transformed that liminality into empathetic storytelling. Ghosh's portrayal of Binodini embraces what Mukherjee refers to as "transgressive" desires (Mukherjee 1), reflecting Ghosh's celebration of his non-normative sexuality (Ghosh). Binodini experiences isolation and societal criticism, which Ghosh profoundly perceived, and her resistance to classification, asserting an autonomous identity similar to Ghosh's definition of self beyond binaries. This analysis demonstrates that the harmonious integration of biographical perspective and cinematic detail is the source of *Chokher Bali's* richness. The film's most poignant moments – Binodini's gaze through the opera glasses, her subdued smile while withholding water, her tearful yet determined farewell, receive enhanced significance when interpreted as manifestations of Ghosh's own yearning, suffering, and aspiration. In the movie's ending moment, as Binodini disappears into the horizon, the audience is presented with an image that evokes both liberation and solitude – depicting Ghosh's philosophical vision. Therefore, Rituparno Ghosh's personal perspective not only influenced *Chokher Bali* but completely redefined it, transforming Binodini's narrative of desire and loss into a bold assertion of gender, autonomy, and the right to live genuinely. Through Binodini, Ghosh addresses all who have

experienced detachment and asserts that self-discovery, regardless of its solitary nature, constitutes the ultimate triumph.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

To sum up, this thesis has examined Rituparno Ghosh's *Chokher Bali* (2003), focusing on the reconfiguration of female desire, repression, and agency through Freudian psychoanalysis and Laura Mulvey's male gaze theory. This study employs Freud's structural model of the psyche—the id, ego, and superego, alongside his theories of libido, repression, and sublimation in order to clarify the nuanced psychological conflicts of Binodini and Asha, whose emotional trajectories represent the broader tensions between personal desires and societal norms. Binodini's internal conflict between innate desire and moral constraint illustrates the emotional repression experienced by women in traditional patriarchal structures, whereas Asha's revolution from passivity to self-awareness demonstrates the transformative abilities of sublimation.

Through a qualitative textual analysis, this research illustrates how Ghosh, influenced by his personal experiences with gender identity, challenges traditional cinematic representations of female victimhood. Laura Mulvey's theory of the male gaze further explains how Ghosh's cinematic framing objectifies and undermines female representation, allowing characters such as Binodini to manipulate visibility and reclaim agency. Ghosh's visual strategies and narrative techniques not only illustrate repression but also establish possibilities for female autonomy within a society that has restrictive norms.

Ultimately, *Chokher Bali* reinterprets female subjectivity as a continuous psychological struggle within and in opposition to patriarchal power structures. Through an integration of psychoanalytic insight and feminist cinematic practice, Ghosh depicts female desire as a diverse expression of individuality rather than a transgression to be repressed. This thesis enhances film

studies, psychoanalysis, and gender theory by providing an extensive examination of the interplay between psychological conflict, repressed desire, and visual power dynamics in determining female agency in contemporary Indian cinema. This reinforces Ghosh's position as a revolutionary figure in reinterpreting female narratives with empathy, depth, and resistance.

While this thesis emphasizes Freudian psychoanalysis and feminist cinematic critique, it also opens further integrative analyses of *Chokher Bali*, especially through postcolonial or queer theoretical lenses. Future research might explore how Ghosh's extensive work continuously challenges conventional norms and gender binaries in Indian cinema. Furthermore, analyzing the perception of *Chokher Bali* among modern audiences may provide insights into the shifting perspectives on gender, desire, and agency within South Asian cultural discourse.

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