

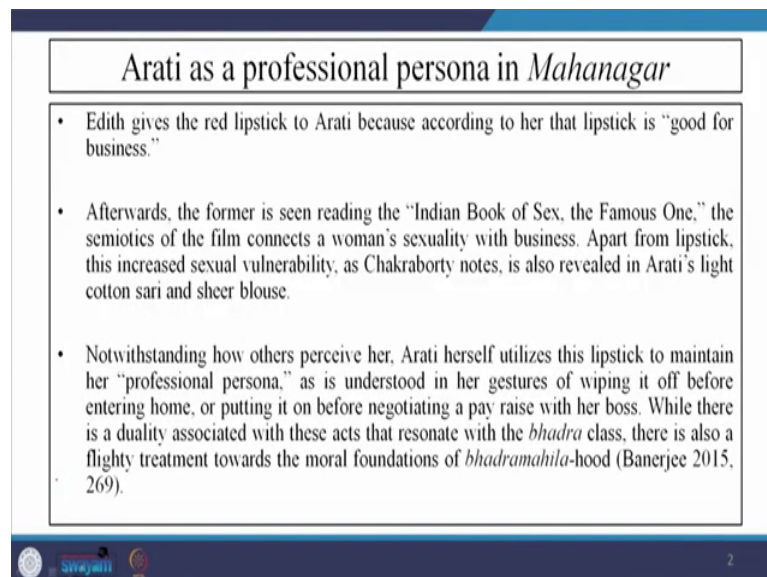
Partition of India in Print Media and Cinema
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Lecture - 53
Refugee Women and Patriarchal Society - II

Good morning and welcome back to the lecture series on Partition of India in Print Media and Cinema. We are talking about Refugee Women and the Patriarchal Society. So, this is going to be a continuation from our previous day's lecture. We were talking about Mahanagar and we are discussing or we are examining the central character, the female protagonist Arati.

Here, we were talking about the symbol of the lipstick and how a lipstick is gifted to Arati by her Eurasian colleague, Edith. Edith says that...Edith makes a very important point regarding why the red on the parting of the hair is considered as sacrosanct and in fact, something very important, something very important for the Hindu woman; the red dot on the forehead is much revered.

And then, why is red on the lip disapproved, and that is when she gives sunglasses and lipstick to Arati. Arati starts looking like a heroine, the Bollywood heroine that her sister-in-law Bani had initially or towards the beginning of the film [aspired]. Bani had imagined Arati as a Bollywood heroine and that is how, that is harkened back when she dons the sunglass and she wears the lipstick and she takes and experiments with her new persona as a female, you know, as a saleswoman going door to door selling machines. (Refer Slide Time: 02:21)



Arati as a professional persona in *Mahanagar*

- Edith gives the red lipstick to Arati because according to her that lipstick is "good for business."
- Afterwards, the former is seen reading the "Indian Book of Sex, the Famous One," the semiotics of the film connects a woman's sexuality with business. Apart from lipstick, this increased sexual vulnerability, as Chakraborty notes, is also revealed in Arati's light cotton sari and sheer blouse.
- Notwithstanding how others perceive her, Arati herself utilizes this lipstick to maintain her "professional persona," as is understood in her gestures of wiping it off before entering home, or putting it on before negotiating a pay raise with her boss. While there is a duality associated with these acts that resonate with the *bhadra* class, there is also a flighty treatment towards the moral foundations of *bhadramahila*-hood (Banerjee 2015, 269).

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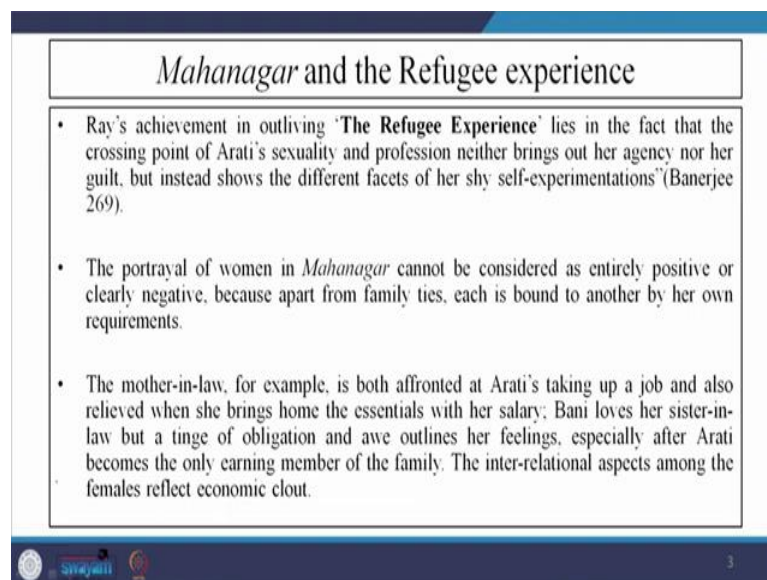
Edith gifts the lipstick to Arati saying that the lipstick is good for business and then onward, we see there is a point, where Edith is seen as reading the Indian Book of Sex, the Famous One and it...the semiotics of the film thereby connects the woman's sexuality

with business. So, we see Poulomi Chakraborty has argued that Arati's increased sexual vulnerability is revealed in her light cotton sari and in her sheer blouse.

So, notwithstanding how different critics perceive this remarkable, you know, female protagonist on screen that Satyajit Ray has created, Arati herself... we need to understand how Arati herself perceives the new persona of... her new persona as a saleswoman, and she is... as we can read or as we can understand she utilizes the lipstick to maintain her professional persona and yet, she is wiping it off before she enters her home.

So, she wears the lipstick during negotiating her pay raise. She erases it or wipes it off before entering her home, returning home. And so, there is a kind of duality in which Arati inhabits, and it becomes... this duality is also commenting on her flighty...it goes on to reveal her flighty treatment or rather raise flighty treatment towards the moral foundations of a bhadramahila.

She is not sticking to any set, pre-given set of values. So, her lipstick, one could see it as a rich ground for her experimentations, where she is not taking any of her persona as permanent or as something even very serious that she has to go on wearing forever. (Refer Slide Time: 04:43)



Mahanagar and the Refugee experience

- Ray's achievement in outliving 'The Refugee Experience' lies in the fact that the crossing point of Arati's sexuality and profession neither brings out her agency nor her guilt, but instead shows the different facets of her shy self-experimentations' (Banerjee 269).
- The portrayal of women in *Mahanagar* cannot be considered as entirely positive or clearly negative, because apart from family ties, each is bound to another by her own requirements.
- The mother-in-law, for example, is both affronted at Arati's taking up a job and also relieved when she brings home the essentials with her salary; Bani loves her sister-in-law but a tinge of obligation and awe outlines her feelings, especially after Arati becomes the only earning member of the family. The inter-relational aspects among the females reflect economic clout.

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So, Satyajit Ray's achievement is in outliving the refugee experience, the much-avowed and the much-discussed refugee experience - something which became central to Ghatak's films.

And Ray is dealing with the the question of immigrants in Calcutta, the quandary, the dilemma for the newly-coming population and yet, he is in a way outliving the refugee, the quintessential refugee experience as he shows the fact that the crossing point of Arati's sexuality and profession neither brings out her agency nor her guilt.

So, she is neither the subservient nor the dominant figure, the pioneer figure; she is neither a failure nor a grand success, an overblown kind of an image. Instead, what we see is her shy, different facets... her shy self-experimentations. So, the portrayal of women in Mahanagar cannot be considered either as a positive or clearly negative, because each woman just like in real life, we see each woman is bound to the other through some practical requirements, practical needs; needs actually bring people closer and bind them together.

So, the mother-in-law, for example, has a very dual and ambivalent attitude towards Arati's newly taken up job, towards Arati's new status as a working woman and so, she is affronted at Arati taking up the job as a saleswoman; especially, a saleswoman is not... I mean, it does not go hand in hand with the middle-class concept of, you know, respectability and chastity of the woman's body because on an everyday basis, she has to meet new people, she has to network, and that is not looked up as something very... something very appropriate. So, her mother-in-law is affronted and yet, when Arati is bringing home essentials with a salary, she cannot but love Arati or admire Arati for doing so because she is greatly boosting, she is greatly supporting the family's basic needs.

Then, we see Bani; Bani has, you know, Bani loves Arati her sister-in-law and yet, this love or admiration also has a tinge of obligation and awe, which outlines Bani's feelings, and this becomes more prominent once Arati becomes the only earning member in the family, her husband unfortunately loses his job.

And so, the interrelation aspects among the female members is intricate, it is complicated; but it in a way, it in a way incorporates or it in a way, brings in the question of... it brings in the question of economic clout. And so, we see there is a point, a very

interesting point, where a mutual pact or kind of contract happens tacitly between Bani and Arati, where Arati takes up the responsibility for Bani's continuing education.

So, she ensures that Bani can further her education and in exchange, Bani is required or expected to take care of Arati's son, when she goes out to work, and also help her with some of the domestic chores. So Arati, we see, is a caring and dutiful person. She is a good daughter-in-law and sister-in-law. She is a good family member. But she is not like Ghatak's numero uno figure, the much remembered figure Nita in Meghe Dhaka Tara.

She is... Arati is not an icon of sacrifice. Her sense of guilt which is very human, very natural gets articulated when she has to compensate, she has to recompense her son with different kinds of allurements. She is bringing toys and thereby, she is trying to normalize her persona at home. And we have already talked about how patriarchal values deeply inform Arati's in-laws household; her father-in-law was a commanding patriarch and Subrato finds it very difficult to see her as a working woman.

At a point, he comments that women should not join the workforce because attractive women...they deter men from performing well or...extremely attractive women should not, you know, they kind of draw men's attention and thereby, men's performance becomes poorer in the job arena.

So, women should not be participating, and we see the same reflection in Arati's son also. He has a toy gun and he wants to shoot his mother, Arati, because ...and he says that you are a bad mother; you are away from home for such a long time. So, we see these values being inculcated in the male child from a very early stage. So, and we see Arati sorely guilty and she is trying to normalize her working woman's persona at home; she is trying to convince all her relatives.



Her guilt is amplified at a point when she throws away the lipstick, in order to prove that she is indeed the same Arati, same former Arati. So, she proves to operate from within the given yardsticks of an androcentric society. She is not an overblown character, who is suddenly achieving a new milestone or someone who is doing something drastically different. She is a very normal person and her traits are not something unprecedented.

So, however, we see that at the end of Mahanagar, Arati decides to quit her job. At a stage when her family has significant financial...serious financial constraints and they

need Arati to retain her job, she quits and here, she is... a lot of critics have read this as Arati coming back within the fold of bhadra-ness or within the normative fold and meeting the mores, the behavioral expectations. So, behavioral prescriptions associated with the bhadramahila. (Refer Slide Time: 12:34)

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- Arati is caring and dutiful to each member, but **not an icon of sacrifice**. Her sense of guilt is very clearly articulated, in scenes where she recompenses her son with different kinds of allurements and tries to normalize her "working woman's" persona at home.
- Her guilt is amplified when she throws away her lipstick to prove that she is indeed the former Arati. In doing so, she proves to operate from within the given yardsticks of **an androcentric society**.
- At the end of *Mahanagar*, Arati's quitting of her job has a particular ethical basis, where her gender consciousness goes above her middle-class, upper-caste, economically stressed and immigrant aspects of identity. When her boss, an immigrant Bengali himself, tries to overrate her by insulting Edith, Arati is keen enough to see a flirtatious intimation underlying his professed desire of establishing nationalistic and provincial kinship with her (Banerjee 272).

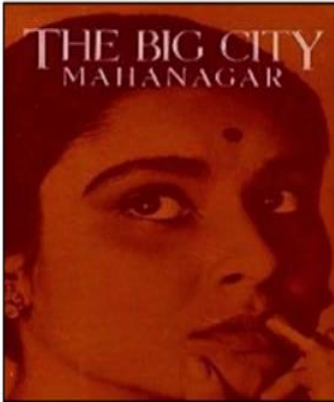
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And not really, one could see a gender consciousness in her act, which goes above her middle-class or upper-caste, economically stressed and immigrant aspects of identity. So, when her immigrant boss... (her boss himself incidentally hails from the same district as Arati's family, they are from Pabna in Eastern Pakistan...which has become Eastern Pakistan then) and so, the boss kind of insinuates, you know, helping Arati on the grounds of nepotism.

He says that, you and I are both from Pabna; so, I will favor you in this job. But she is keen enough, Arati is keen enough to see a flirtatious insinuation or intimation underlying this desire of establishing some sort of provincial kinship with her.

The boss trying to establish certain provincial kinship with her and so, Mahanagar has been, especially Mahanagar's ending has been criticized very often, very frequently.. criticized as being too optimistic, especially given that it is against the backdrop of Indo-China War in 1962 and the steep influx of refugees, where Calcutta was undergoing a very low phase. (Refer Slide Time: 14:10)

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- The "optimism" that critics commonly disapprove in *Mahanagar's* ending, can be revisited. In the end, the conjugal resolution does not happen either through the wife's submission or through her messianic support.
- Even as the couple walk together in search for a new future, Arati by this time has acquired a **distinct public Self** apart from her husband and her family, as she is not only capable of applying for a job, but also brave enough to resign it, if deemed objectionable.

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How could the end be so optimistic? We see that the conjugal resolution, the kind of reconciliation that happens between Subratha and Arati, some kind of distance had formed through the progression of the narrative and later in the end, it is reconciled. However, it does not happen through Arati's submission or coming back within the fold of bhadra-ness, as has been frequently read in the film, and she does not become messiah through supporting her husband.

She is still a very ordinary human being with ordinary traits. As the couple in the end walk together in search for a new future, Arati however, by this time is not a woman lacking confidence. She has a distinct public self, apart from her husband, apart from her family, and she is not only capable of applying for a new job; but also brave enough to resign, if it is deemed as objectionable.

So, once again Satyajit Ray is pointing to the spinal cord of the middle-class, which was shaken, if not lost because of/ due to this crisis brought about by the partition, the cataclysm. (Refer Slide Time: 15:39)

***Meghe Dhaka Tara* by Ritwik Ghatak**

- *Meghe Dhaka Tara* revolves around a lower middle-class *bhadra* Bengali refugee family, which is cast against the excruciating framework of the 1950s post-Partition Calcutta setting. The female protagonist Nita epitomizes the highly prevalent figure of the unmarried female breadwinners from middle-class Bengali refugee families.



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Now, we are going to talk about... we are going to talk about *Meghe Dhaka Tara* by Ritwik Ghatak.

So, *Meghe Dhaka Tara* revolves around a lower middle class Bhadra Bengali refugee family, and it is cast against the excruciating framework of the 1950s post-partition Calcutta setting and the miserable conditions, the fall of the middle-class refugee populace.


So, the female protagonist, Nita, epitomizes the highly prevalent figure of the unmarried female breadwinner from the middle-class Bengali refugee family, -which later on, as Uditi Sen argues, had gone on to become a stereotype, a part of the popular imagination about the middle-class female Bengali refugee. So, it is a *numero uno* artwork by Ghatak. (Refer Slide Time: 16:33)



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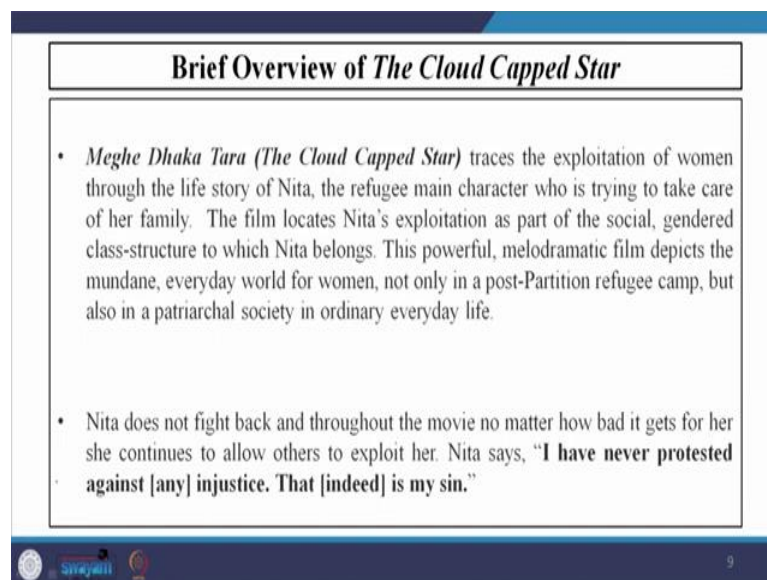
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- *Meghe Dhaka Tara* - depicts protagonist Nita as a symbol of sacrifice, who becomes a scapegoat for future improvement of her kin. By deciding not to pursue her Master's degree but instead support the family with her income, by giving up her fiancé to her younger sister Gita for marriage, and ultimately contracting the syndromes of tuberculosis, Nita becomes the unforgettable and universal epitome of the moribund nourishing Mother.
"Those who suffer for others, suffer forever."
- Shoma Chaudhury – "[T]he female protagonist [in *Cloud-Capped Star*] is one of the rarest characters in cinema history as she works not with the intention of becoming independent or to be liberated from a patriarchal society, but to sustain her extended family."

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It is the most popular work, it is arguably the most popular work, much talked after and much talked about and researched, almost over-researched and over-discussed work by Ghatak. So, Nita in the film is a protagonist and she is a symbol of sacrifice and through the course of the narration, she becomes a scapegoat for future improvement of her kin and by deciding not to pursue her master's degree, she instead supports....she tends to/she decides not to pursue her master's degree, but instead support the family with her income and then, later on, she gives up her fiance to her younger sister Gita for marriage and ultimately, she contracts the syndromes of tuberculosis. She dies in the end. And so, Nita becomes the unforgettable and universal epitome of the moribund nourishing mother-giver's figure.

Those who suffer for others, suffer forever is - the bottom line, the message that the audience takes home. So, Shoma Chaudhury observes that the female protagonist in *Cloud-capped Star* or *Meghe Dhaka Tara* is one of the rarest characters in cinema history, as she works not with the intention of becoming independent or to be liberated from a patriarchal society, but to sustain her extended family. How far this is a positive message is something that the reader, the scholar needs to examine further. (Refer Slide Time: 18:36)



Brief Overview of *The Cloud Capped Star*

- *Meghe Dhaka Tara (The Cloud Capped Star)* traces the exploitation of women through the life story of Nita, the refugee main character who is trying to take care of her family. The film locates Nita's exploitation as part of the social, gendered class-structure to which Nita belongs. This powerful, melodramatic film depicts the mundane, everyday world for women, not only in a post-Partition refugee camp, but also in a patriarchal society in ordinary everyday life.
- Nita does not fight back and throughout the movie no matter how bad it gets for her she continues to allow others to exploit her. Nita says, "**I have never protested against [any] injustice. That [indeed] is my sin.**"

So, *Meghe Dhaka Tara* traces the exploitation of women through the life story of Nita, the refugee main character, who is trying to take care of her family, and the film locates Nita's exploitation as part of the social gendered class structure to which Nita belongs. So, the film is powerful, it makes use of the genre of melodrama consciously, and it


depicts the everyday world for women not only in refugee camps and colonies; but also in the larger sense, in a patriarchal society, in an ordinary everyday life.

So, Nita does not fight back the challenges or you know, she does not fight back the injustice that is meted out to her. Throughout the movie, no matter how bad it gets, she allows other people to exploit her or rather, as she confesses at one point, she loves her family too much. She says at a point that I madly love all of you.

So, may be others exploit her love for them and there is also a point, where she says that I am being punished because my only sin is that I have never protested against any injustice. She tells Sanat that I should not have been so ordinary, that is my sin. (Refer Slide Time: 20:07)

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- Nita's eventual death could be seen as a punishment, for her unquestioning fulfillment to her family's exploitation and abuse of her. The film critiques the way the family has treated Nita, but also the ways in which Nita has allowed herself to be treated.



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So, Nita's death in the end could be seen as a punishment for her unquestioning fulfillment of her family's needs, constant demands and abuse of her in a sense, and the film critiques the way the family has treated Nita and yet, also how Nita has allowed herself to be treated.

However, we see something problematic with the depiction of Nita. While critiquing this point Nita, we cannot overlook how Nita has been glorified and she has been deified throughout. So, although, she is the exploited refugee woman, the way she has been depicted by Ghatak, a lot of women... the message that goes thereby, the message that goes out to the audience thereby, a lot of women/ working women would find it as glorious to be related to Nita.

All the people cringe from the thought of dying in the end; the glamour and the glory, the halo that is attached with Nita which makes her unforgettable. People tend to forget other Ghatak's characters, who are as significant if not more, such as Sita the Golden Thread (in *Suvarnarekha*) - tells us something, tells us about something problematic in this depiction, in this celebration of a tragic death, in this deification of a star-crossed woman.

So, maybe it could be misread and you know, seen as an ideal figure that women want to become. So, no one in the film, for example, wants to become like Gita. She is shown in the light of a villain; but she says something... she is not as good at studies, she is not as meritorious as Nita and yet, she is very practical.

There is a point, she is ...there is a point when she states [tells Nita] that - you must understand people do not have the patience to wait forever. When she is about to marry her sister's fiance Sanat, she says that people (referring to Sanat) may not have the patience to wait for you (Nita) forever. So, and that is how she justifies.

She is a praiseworthy character in a way because she makes the best out of what she has. If we change the parameters of what, I mean, if we do not see the film through the lens of patriarchal values and the parameters set for the good woman, we might appreciate Gita for her, you know, pragmatic decisions; she is a very selfish woman, but she is a survivor nonetheless. (Refer Slide Time: 23:42)

Gender and Class in Ghatak's 'Meghe Dhaka Tara'

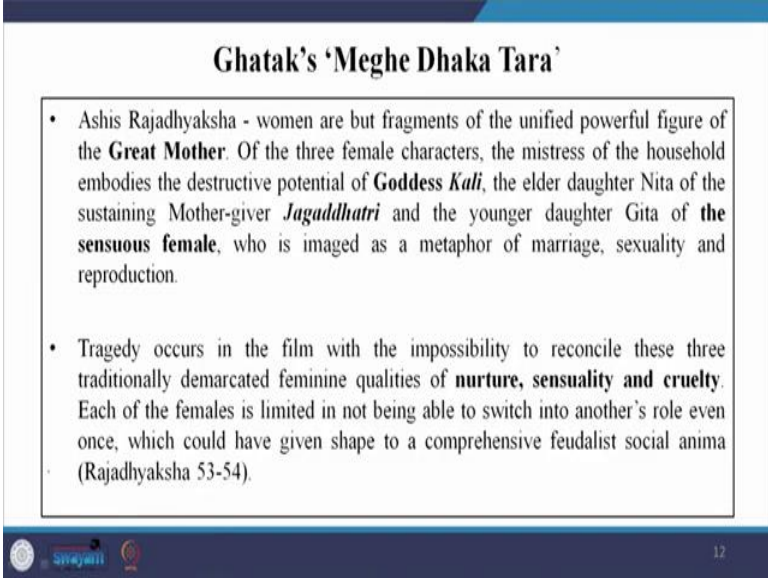
- The film is a commentary and critique of the class (caste) and gender dynamics that existed pre- and post-Partition. There are many parts of the film where gender violence, exploitation, and mentality of the bourgeois class are apparent.
- Nita's father is the most obvious example of **bourgeois attitude**. There are scenes where he quotes Yeats, valuing the intellectual class as higher than the working class. This is evident when he reprimands his son for taking up job in a factory. He is furious and disgusted by the embarrassment that his son is now a "**labourer**", which is below their "civilized intellectual bourgeois class".

So, the film is a commentary and a critique of the class, caste and gender dynamics that existed pre- and post-partition. There are many parts of the film, where gender violence, exploitation and the bourgeois thinking has been made apparent. So, for example, Nita's father exudes bourgeois attitude.

There are scenes where he is quoting,...he is part of the intellectual class, he was a teacher and he does not think very highly about the working class. This becomes evident when he reprimands his son Montu for taking up a job in a factory. So, he says that it is a... it is an actual fall of the middle-class when a member from a highly educated family, a venerable family has to go out and join the blue-collar job... something like that.

So, he is disgusted by the embarrassment that this would bring to his family now; the fact that his son has now become a labourer and which is supposed to be below their civilized intellectual bourgeois class. So, the class consciousness is obvious in the film and Ashis Rajadhyaksha notes that women are fragments of the unified powerful figure of the Great Mother in the film.

So, of the three female characters, the mistress embodies the destructive potential of the Goddess Kali that is the mother of Nita and Gita and the two other sons. So, the mother in the family is the Goddess Kali; the elder daughter Nita is the Mother-giver Jagaddhatri or the woman... the Goddess that holds the world. (Refer Slide Time: 25:28)



Ghatak's 'Meghe Dhaka Tara'

- Ashis Rajadhyaksha - women are but fragments of the unified powerful figure of the **Great Mother**. Of the three female characters, the mistress of the household embodies the destructive potential of **Goddess Kali**, the elder daughter Nita of the sustaining Mother-giver **Jagaddhatri** and the younger daughter Gita of the **sensuous female**, who is imaged as a metaphor of marriage, sexuality and reproduction.
- Tragedy occurs in the film with the impossibility to reconcile these three traditionally demarcated feminine qualities of **nurture, sensuality and cruelty**. Each of the females is limited in not being able to switch into another's role even once, which could have given shape to a comprehensive feudal social anima (Rajadhyaksha 53-54).

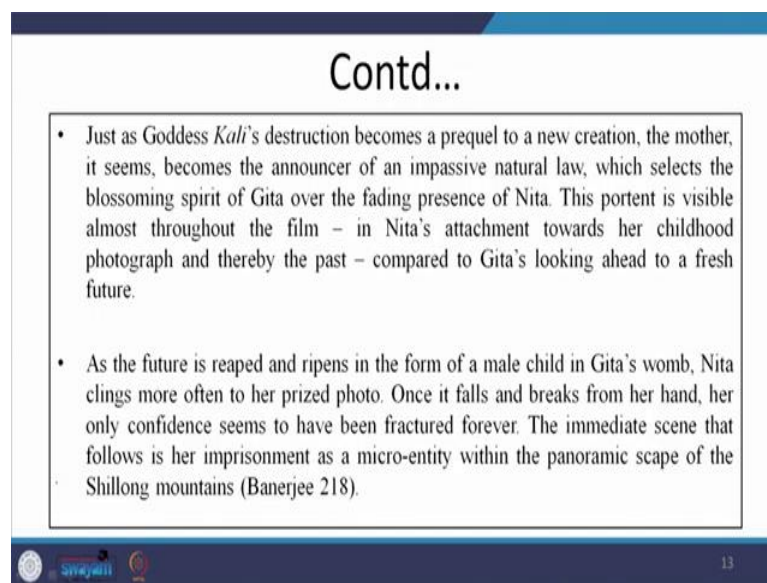
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And the younger daughter Gita is a sensuous female and she... so, Gita becomes a metaphor of marriage, sexuality and reproduction. Gita's you know.. Gita's life flourishes

at the expense of attenuation, debilitation and death of Nita. So, tragedy occurs in the film with the impossibility of these three traditionally demarcated feminine qualities' reconciling at any point.

So, nurturing, sensuality and cruelty, cannot... these three qualities do not interchange, exchange... or these women are purely one of these qualities, they are not hybrid of two or three qualities. The three qualities do not interface at any point. So, to put it in simpler words, the nurturing woman can never become sensuous and selfish and you know, infused with sexuality, which could have proven better for her you know marital prospects, conjugal prospects; the cruel mother can never be the nurturer.

Then, she would understand the case of Nita; and the sensual figure... she could sometimes be cruel, but she can never be the nurturing woman, who takes charge of the family. She just is uninvolved, she is too narcissistic and drowned in her own needs or in her own thoughts, in her own world. So, each of the female is limited in not being able to switch into another's role even for once, which could have given shape to a comprehensive feudal social anima. (Refer Slide Time: 27:18)



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- Just as Goddess *Kali*'s destruction becomes a prequel to a new creation, the mother, it seems, becomes the announcer of an impassive natural law, which selects the blossoming spirit of Gita over the fading presence of Nita. This portent is visible almost throughout the film – in Nita's attachment towards her childhood photograph and thereby the past – compared to Gita's looking ahead to a fresh future.
- As the future is reaped and ripens in the form of a male child in Gita's womb, Nita clings more often to her prized photo. Once it falls and breaks from her hand, her only confidence seems to have been fractured forever. The immediate scene that follows is her imprisonment as a micro-entity within the panoramic scape of the Shillong mountains (Banerjee 218).

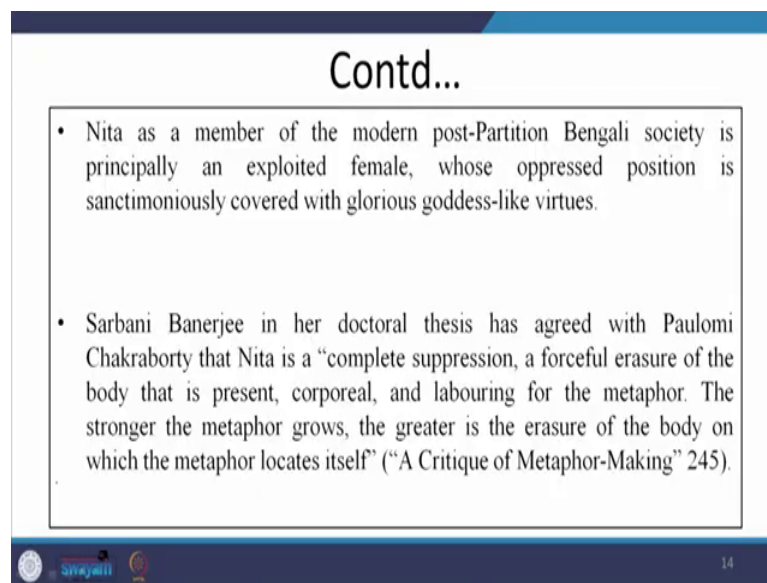
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So, this is a very important point that Rajadhyaksha makes. So, the Goddess Kali's destruction becomes a prequel to a new creation and so, the mother becomes the announcer of an impassive natural law, where Gita, the spirit of Gita is kind of naturally selected over the fading presence of Nita, and we see Nita's attachment to the past, while Gita is looking ahead for a fresh new future where she is going to get married and with

the birth of a son, it is sealing the marriage with the the final you know, final hallmark of you know bourgeoisdom or bourgeois happiness. So, she gives birth to a male child in the end. It is sealing the marriage with some kind of authentic happiness prescribed by bourgeoisdom; on the other hand, Nita is looking backwards.

She is constantly nostalgic, attached to her childhood photograph and thereby, her past and so, we understand that she is the debilitating figure, the figure that is going to fade away and move to the oblivion. So, as a future ripens in the form of a male child in Gita's womb, Nita clings more often to her prized photo, a photograph from childhood, where all the siblings are together and there is a point in the film, where the photo.. the photo frame falls and breaks from her hand.

All the confidence of going back to the idyllic [past] you know is fractured forever, and her imprisonment as a micro-entity, as a nobody/ vanishing figure within the panoramic scape of the Shillong Mountains. (Refer Slide Time: 29:06)



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- Nita as a member of the modern post-Partition Bengali society is principally an exploited female, whose oppressed position is sanctimoniously covered with glorious goddess-like virtues.
- Sarbani Banerjee in her doctoral thesis has agreed with Paulomi Chakraborty that Nita is a “complete suppression, a forceful erasure of the body that is present, corporeal, and labouring for the metaphor. The stronger the metaphor grows, the greater is the erasure of the body on which the metaphor locates itself” (“A Critique of Metaphor-Making” 245).

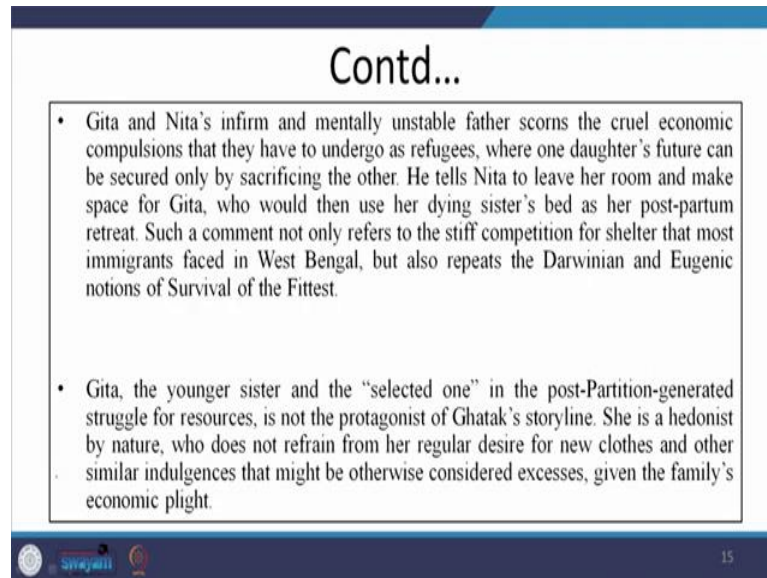
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Nita as a member of the modern post-Partition Bengali society is principally an exploited female, an oppressed position and yet, like I said, she is sanctimoniously you know glorified with some Goddess-like virtues; she is the ideal woman or the woman that the refugee man would like to ...the qualities that the refugee man would ideally like to see in a woman.

So, Nita is a complete suppression, a forceful erasure of the body that is present [and] corporeal, and labouring for the metaphor; and the stronger the metaphor grows, the

greater is the erasure of the body on which the metaphor locates itself. So, the bigger the Goddess becomes, the smaller the human in Nita becomes; the human possibilities diminish more and more to the point of vanishing.

So, when she has entirely become a Goddess and the Goddess-like figure in the memory of the family, by then she is dead; she does not exist as a human, she has seized to be. (Refer Slide Time: 30:19)



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- Gita and Nita's infirm and mentally unstable father scorns the cruel economic compulsions that they have to undergo as refugees, where one daughter's future can be secured only by sacrificing the other. He tells Nita to leave her room and make space for Gita, who would then use her dying sister's bed as her post-partum retreat. Such a comment not only refers to the stiff competition for shelter that most immigrants faced in West Bengal, but also repeats the Darwinian and Eugenic notions of Survival of the Fittest.
- Gita, the younger sister and the "selected one" in the post-Partition-generated struggle for resources, is not the protagonist of Ghatak's storyline. She is a hedonist by nature, who does not refrain from her regular desire for new clothes and other similar indulgences that might be otherwise considered excesses, given the family's economic plight.

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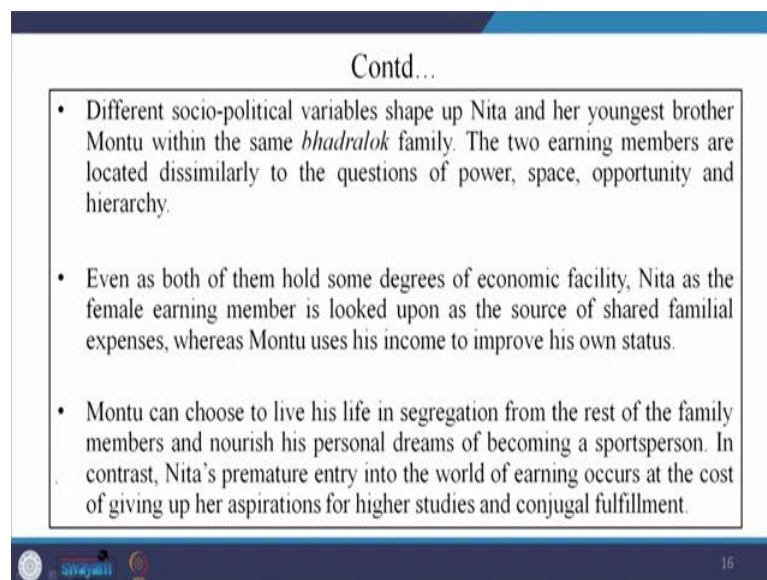
So, Gita and Nita's infirm and mentally unstable father blames the cruel economic compulsion that they have to undergo as refugees, where one daughter's future can be secured only through sacrificing the other, and there is a point, where Nita is told to leave the room and make space for Gita so that Gita could use the same room as...Gita could use a dying sister's bed as a postpartum retreat. So, this could be seen as a symbol of the competition for space, for shelter that most immigrants faced in West Bengal, in India at that time.

And it also repeats the Darwinian and eugenic notions of survival of the fittest. So, Gita becomes a selected one in the post-Partition generated struggle for resources and so, she is not the protagonist, she is not the heroine in Ghatak's storyline; she is the anti-type. Nita is the type, she [Gita] is the anti-type. She is a hedonist, who does not refrain from her regular desires for new clothes, something that is considered as an excess given the family's economic plight.

So, different socio-political variables shape up Nita and her youngest brother Montu within the same familial bounds; so, within the same familial space, they are both working members and they are both earning members and yet, located dissimilarly vis-a-vis the questions of power, space, opportunity and hierarchy. Both of them hold some degree of economic facility. (Refer Slide Time: 32:08)

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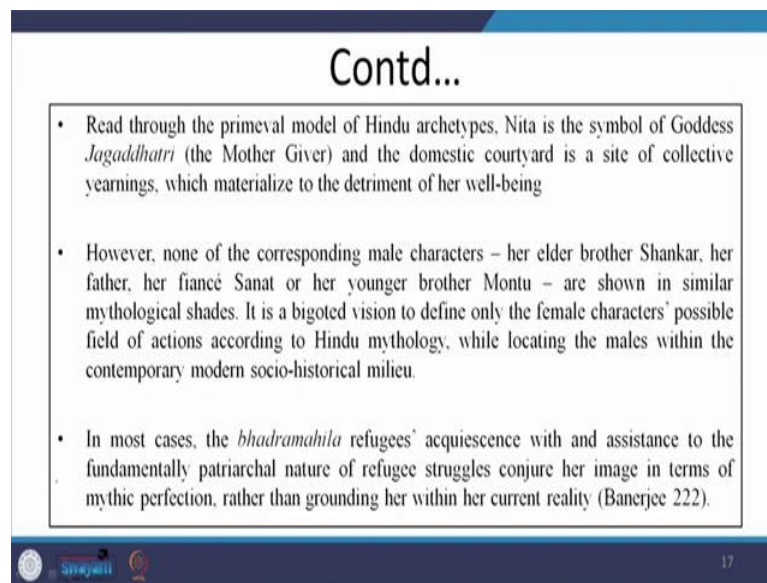
- Different socio-political variables shape up Nita and her youngest brother Montu within the same *bhadralok* family. The two earning members are located dissimilarly to the questions of power, space, opportunity and hierarchy.
- Even as both of them hold some degrees of economic facility, Nita as the female earning member is looked upon as the source of shared familial expenses, whereas Montu uses his income to improve his own status.
- Montu can choose to live his life in segregation from the rest of the family members and nourish his personal dreams of becoming a sportsperson. In contrast, Nita's premature entry into the world of earning occurs at the cost of giving up her aspirations for higher studies and conjugal fulfillment.



And yet Nita as the female earning member is expected to meet the familial expenses and Montu, the youngest son, can use his income towards his.. to improve his own status. So,

he wants to become a sportsperson, he lives a segregated life from the rest of the family and he nourishes his own personal dreams of you know, flourishing in sports some day.

In contrast, Nita gives up her dreams of studying the Master's... completing her Master's degree. Her premature entry into the world of earning happens at the cost of giving up/sacrificing her aspirations for higher studies and also sacrificing her dreams of conjugal fulfillment with Sanat. (Refer Slide Time: 32:59)



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- Read through the primeval model of Hindu archetypes, Nita is the symbol of Goddess *Jagaddhatri* (the Mother Giver) and the domestic courtyard is a site of collective yearnings, which materialize to the detriment of her well-being
- However, none of the corresponding male characters – her elder brother Shankar, her father, her fiancé Sanat or her younger brother Montu – are shown in similar mythological shades. It is a bigoted vision to define only the female characters' possible field of actions according to Hindu mythology, while locating the males within the contemporary modern socio-historical milieu.
- In most cases, the *bhadramahila* refugees' acquiescence with and assistance to the fundamentally patriarchal nature of refugee struggles conjure her image in terms of mythic perfection, rather than grounding her within her current reality (Banerjee 222).

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So, when we see the film through the primal model of Hindu archetypes, Nita is a symbol of a Goddess Jagaddhatri or the Mother-giver and the domestic courtyard is shown as a site of collective yearnings, the desires coming from different ends, from the different family members, and all of these desires are fulfilled by Nita and they materialize, they are met to the detriment of her own well-being.

So, none of the male characters, however, we see are shown in similar mythological shades. So, the brother, the fiancé, the father...they are modern human beings. So, this could be seen as an orthodox vision to define only the female characters', you know, possible field of actions or thoughts according to Hindu mythology.

So, women have to become either the good Goddess or the bad Goddess; the type or the anti-type. Males do not have such compulsions. So, while locating the males within the contemporary modern socio-historical milieu, the women are depicted as archetypes and

so, they actually go on to fulfill stereotypical meanings about refugee women, about the refugee women.

So, in most cases the bhadramahila refugees' assistance to the fundamentally patriarchal nature of refugee struggles end up conjuring her image in terms of such mythic perfection, rather than grounding her within the current reality which is more variegated, more complex. (Refer Slide Time: 34:53)

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- *Cloud-Capped Star* mutes and disavows Nita's voice, then her existential scream represents the affect that this action brings in its fold. Through every spoken word, sounds and silence, the film moves towards this paroxysm that the scream represents. The scream becomes the fatal identity of Nita, her hybridization of the mythic, the historical and the individual.
- The audience's identification with Shankar becomes fraught with doubts and guilt, while Nita's excessive cry shatters the mastery that it enjoyed through controlling her. The continued celebration of Nita's scream in Bengali cinephilia is therefore a celebration of one's stagnation. A path towards the future can only be charted through a cognizance of this collective disavowal.

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So, Cloud-capped Star mutes and disavows Nita's voice; her existential scream represents the affect that this action brings in its fold through every spoken word or even the silence. The film moves towards the paroxysm that the screen represents; the audience's identification with Shankar becomes fraught with doubts and guilt, while Nita's excessive cry shatters the mastery that it enjoyed through controlling the complacency; it is kind of shaken for once.

So, the continued celebration of Nita's scream in Bengali cinephilia is, therefore, a celebration of one's stagnation. A path towards the future could only be charted through a cognizance of such collective disavowal. It is very important, before I conclude the lecture, to note the fact that when Nita claims... it is kind of something, arguably the most remembered line from the film... "Dada ami banchbo."

So, "elder brother, even I want to live", and it reverberates, it comes back to her and the next moment, her brother retorts by saying that are you a kid, are you a child? do not

behave like a child, and the next moment, he calls the nurse for some clinical help. The brother says that have you gone mad.

So, it is seen as an impossibility that actually, as Rajadhyashya says, the nurturer can never switch to the role of the desiring; the desirer is the sensual woman, who also seeks to have a reasonably good quality life. When she for once, only for once in the film she expresses that desire, she is quickly incarcerated within the image of a mad woman. So, she has she becomes... for her, it is considered as an abnormal [behaviour]; someone like Nita cannot demand, cannot desire to live. As soon as she says that, she is treated as a juvenile, as mad, as someone anomalous and so, the nurse is immediately summoned to control the situation. The brother wants a clinical assistance or response or he has a clinical response to deal with Nita's question.

He does not or he cannot face up to the fact that it is a social, cultural, economic quandary or dilemma, and not a clinical one. Because Nita is neither a juvenile nor a mad woman in claiming something as ordinary as wanting to live a good life.

So, with this, I would like to conclude and we will continue in our next lecture.

Thank you.