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Female Stereotypes and the Sustenance of Patriarchy: A Study into Sarat Chandra

Chattopadhyay's *Parineeta*

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This thesis entitled “Female Stereotypes and the Sustenance of Patriarchy: A Study into Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay’s *Parineeta*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur, Kathmandu by Homnath Basnet has been approved by the undersigned members of the Thesis Committee

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Abstract

This study into *Parineta* unveils the miserable conditions of women and girls in early twentieth century Bengali society. The condition of females was pathetic because the society was highly based on dowry system and patriarchy. This study aims to show the stereotypical representation of female characters. Lalita, the heroine of the novel, is an orphan girl and she is obliged to marry at the age of thirteen. She is deprived of her fundamental rights, her identity and submerges her identity in Shekhar, an agent of patriarchy. Most of the female characters in the novel are represented as child bearing machine, innocent, submissive, and emotional. This study shows how women are obliged to surrender before patriarchy and how Sarat Chandra's project of female independence remained unfinished. This study aims at exposing Sarat Chandra's ambivalence in treating female characters.

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I. Sarat Chandra and His Female Characters

Parineeta, a novel by Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, represents early twentieth century Bengali society and its dark sides like discriminations, superstitions, and immoral practices in the name of religion. The novel shows how there is an upheaval in a family because of the birth of a daughter in early twentieth century Bengali society. Females are depicted as low grade human beings. They are taken as devastating factor, so they are treated in a stereotypical manner since their childhood. Gurucharan has been devastated and lost his entire property because of his destiny to hand over countless properties as dowry to his daughters. So, his condition has become pathetic. Basically early twentieth century Bengali society had been devastated due to evil tradition or orthodox and rigid caste system. Patriarchal tradition has been depicting females stereotypically since time immemorial, so the then Indian tradition can't be exception since it remained under English colonization for so many years. Gurucharan is devastated, terrified and shocked by the arrival of a new girl child in his family.

From the very beginning of human civilization, females have not been able to occupy any significant place in the society and family. Males were physically strong, brave and able to tackle with hazards. Generally, males were prescribed to handle outer activities but females were confined within the household works, like cooking, washing, caring etc. due to their sensitive physical structure. Normally they started to perform the role of mother, wife etc. but later it became a norm which males established. The traditional role structure of the society monolithically imposed the male rules and regulations upon women. From that very era, females and girls have been victimized in the name of tradition and culture. Traditionally females have been treated as inferior, weak and secondary to male.

During the time period, the role structure of men and women promoted the gap between them. The most striking aspect of the then society was that the relationship between

male and female was one sided, hierarchical, and female dominated. Slowly and gradually females also started to internalize male-made rules and doctrines. The world of women have been denounced as the aesthetics by forgetting the fact that man and woman are two wheels of same chariot. People thought that women can't represent themselves so, they should represent. While representing them, females have been depicted as inferior human being. In the process of representation females were given the tag of witch or goddess but no middle status of human being. *Parineeta* by Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay is also a similar story.

Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, the author of the novel *Parineeta*, was born in a poor Brahmin family on 1876 at Devandapur, a village in west Bengal. He grew up in dire poverty and received very little formal education. After spending some of his youth in Bhagalpur and Muzaffarpur, Sarat Chandra left for Burma at 1903. From Burma he began to send his stories and novels to magazines of Kolkotta. He was very popular as a story- teller, more so than either Bankim or Tagore. His sketches on the social canvas had a very subtle reformist twist to them. His critique on social norm was only a message and never an agenda. He refrained from value judgment. He felt that his duty as a writer was to raise awareness about social malice and not to reform the society. Nevertheless, he faced uphill battle with conservative sections of the Hindu social leaders. He was not particularly liked either by imperial representatives. Though he was always known to be an intrepid champion of marginalized when it comes to novels, personally he was always a shy person. There was an occasion when his name was already announced and he was supposed to meet his readers but he left and the curtain was raised on an empty stage. Being one of the best story- writers, he offered us so many interesting and heart- touching books. Along with *Parineeta* and *Devdas*, so many books are published authored by him.

His books are *Palli Shomaj*, *Baradidi*, *Anudadha*, *Andhere alo*, *Mandir*, *Panther Dabi*, *Kashinath* etc. He received several awards for his contribution to Bengali literature.

“Kuntalin Puraskar” (1903), “Jadattarini Suvarna Padak” (1923), membership of Bengali Sangeet Parishad, (1934) and the Honorary D. lit by the Dhaka University in the year 1936. Bengal suffered the irreparable loss when he passed away on 16th January 1938. His sensitive and daring writings touched the heart and mind of readers and soon he became Bengal's most popular novelist. He dedicated his whole life to writing and became India's first successful professional writer in India. He captured the issue of dire poverty, child marriages, dowry system, orthodox caste system etc. which were prevalent in contemporary Bengali society. He is India's one of the best novelist and story writers of all times. He has tried a photographic representation of grim inhumane picture and pathetic condition of women and girls because of those evil social customs.

Parineeta is a representative novel of early twentieth century Bengali society. It represents the fake ethico-moral customs and the narrow rural politics which becomes blight for the entire woman folk in rural Bengal. In the consequence and benevolence of the young girl, *Parineeta* depicts the renaissance spirit, which enables the entire woman folk to come out of the folds of the false unyielding customs. *Parineeta* was published in 1914 in Bengali, and later it was translated into various languages. Now it has been made into different versions of film. It is fascinating, absorbing and sensitive tale. Sarat Chandra's study of the male ego and its tragic repercussion on matters of the heart, set within a feudal backdrop, is more interesting aspect.

Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay was witness to those upsetting social values and discriminations which were the main causes of female victimization. And these things gave birth to disharmony, disintegration, injustice and violence in the society. He crafted this novel from the perspective of margins, to raise suppressed voices of women and girls. Early twentieth century witnessed, in fact, a rapid expansion of literary periodicals and of the reading public unlike our era of expansion of mass media and television channels. He

provided full dose of reading materials on happening around society and different ups and downs. By depicting every day to activities in a clear manner, he became the first successful professional writer in India. He was contemporary of the literary giant Rabindranath Tagore, and both contributed a lot as major figures in Bengali renaissance and campaign of providing literary freedom to women. Sarat Chandra was among the first to give women a voice in his novels.

Though Sarat Chandra tries to give air to female voices, he portrays the role and character of women in a stereotypical manner in his novel *Parineeta*. Dealing with his bitter experiences of dire poverty and social evils, Sarat Chandra has depicted females merely in the stereotypical roles they are given. In the novel, Bhuvaneshwari has been projected as a child bearing machine, especially daughters, and a devastated mother figure because she had to spend all her property in her daughter's marriage in the name of dowry. She is presented as an unselfish and a balanced, kind mother who showed equal affection to the orphan girl Lalita. Most of the time, she is represented as an innocent weak and submissive woman bursting into tears. Bhuvaneshwari is a representative mother of the then Bengali society.

The female protagonist of the novel *Parineeta* is a thirteen year old girl Lalita. Her unselfish and unconscious devotion to Shekhar is overtly romantic which is associated with the theme of poverty. Lalita is a representative of women in early twentieth century Bengali society. She is shown as an object of entertainment for agents of patriarchy. She has plunged into triangular dilemma between her neighbor, Shekhar and Grin. The marriage of Lalita at 13 years is a burning example of child marriage.

Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, through his mouthpiece Shekhar, portrays Lalita as an idealized girl. She is represented as innocent, unselfish, good and willing to sacrifice herself for Shekhar. Her behaviors, description of childish activities and rapidity in changing attitudes are described in more romantic and emotional way. Most of the time in the novel,

she is presented as subservient, innocent, obedient and a submissive girl. She seems like a commodity to quench the thirst of patriarchy. These deliberate presentations idealized Lalita and presented her older than her real age. She is presented only from emotional aspect. Shekhar and Lalita grow up in each others company. He at last wins the heart of Lalita not spiritually but by a consent kind of patriarchal hegemony. The way snake becomes helpless in the shadow of an eagle, Lalita proves so before Shekhar. He is searching for a bride other than Lalita till the last moment but unexpectedly Lalita and Shekhar's earlier act of exchanging garland bonds them according to Hindu religious system.

It is obvious that Lalita is represented without any criticism in the novel. She is shown to be an emotional, useful and a beautiful orphan girl of teenage who grows up in the hands of Shekhar. Indeed, Lalita has no independent identity but always she is associated with patriarchy.

In describing the queries between his male protagonist Shekhar and Lalita, Sarat Chandra deals with much ambivalence. She can do nothing without the permission of Shekhar like cooking food, drinking tea, moving upstairs and downstairs etc. She seems less energetic and care free than Shekhar. She always falls in a state of indecisiveness like a crow in the haze. She can't decide even playing cards in her leisure time. Sometimes she feels alienated and separated from her mind due to her emotions. Shekhar time and again realizes that the happenings and queries with Lalita are just irritating though she manages everything for him by hook or crook. Her wishes and desires are no longer addressed because patriarchy always turns deaf ear to women sufferings. Instead of solution they feel pleasure in adding fuel to fire. The description of Lalita-Shekhar queries is no other than an enigma of teenage sexuality. Shekhar does convey a sense of being reduced to a less energetic, less active girl Lalita than she really is. On losing her parents at the age of eight, Lalita had become an orphan and she was obliged to take shelter in her uncle's house. So now she has been a part of

her uncle's house. Since the entrance in that house like a younger sibling, she had moved in and orbit around Shekhar had progressed in her studies under his tutelage. Lalita fears herself with her aunt Bhuvaneshwari and Shekhar *da*.

Time and again, she should take permission of Shekhar even to enjoy with her friends. Though Lalita helps to manage many things in Shekhar's daily life and her aunt Bhuvaneshwari, she feels a kind of bitter experience and humiliation. Perhaps without frequently admiring to himself Shekhar feels that life without Lalita is too much like being alone because she has submerged her personality in his.

Shekhar always criticizes Lalita and he never tries to understand her. In various ways he appears selfish, aware only of his own experiences, incapable of feeling empathy with other. Thus he merely notices her childish and emotional behaviors while guiding her and accepts her desire to become one with him as natural. To him, for instance, her desire of drinking tea, playing cards etc. are forbidden because he is guided by patriarchal doctrines and superiority complex. He never considers what this desire might indicate about her emotional aspect. Shekhar says that often she should prepare him in every step of life. He says, "Ah, there you are! Help me to dress such that my bride chooses me!"(9). He assumes that he knows what Lalita feels. He thinks that she never thought of anything else except loving and caring him. Lalita appears victimized and helpless before the evil network of patriarchy which Shekhar throws in the name of guardianship and protector.

Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay is more admired and criticized writer than many of the Indian writers. He is one of the most talked about writers not because he wrote sentimental novels but because he brought out the social evils. His period was very much critical basically in Bengal. He is one who aroused the voice of women along with his contemporary literary giant Kabiguru Rabindranath Tagore. Some critics consider him as a surgeon of social events while some others charged him as a controversial writer and found Sarat

Chandra's male protagonist of cruel nature towards women. Some consider him a freedom giver to women, a literary freedom, if not social and political. Some consider the novel as carrying an existential philosophy that is reflected through the angst of the protagonist whereas others comment the novel as feminist. It seems that most of Sarat Chandra's critics have paid much attention on the politics of choosing female protagonist in all of his writings.

With the emergence of women's movement in the 1960s and of feminist criticism in department of literature, Sarat Chandra became one of the most targeted writers for many critics, who accused him of perpetuating sexist stereotypes in his writings. The early feminist unquestionably diminished his literary reputation in some academic circles and the study of his work in high school and university classes.

Through the major female character Parineeta, Sarat Chandra tries to dismantle the hierarchy between caste, gender and religion. He tries to show victory of female protagonist by showing her union with Shekhar. He expresses sharp discontent both on contemporary society and prevailing patriarchal structure. On the one hand, he presents his heroine as a girl victimized by evil patriarchy; on the other hand, he tries to show her victory over patriarchy. He seems little but ambiguous while portraying his heroine. Some critics have attacked *Parineeta* as a disturbing example of Sarat Chandra's one dimensional, submissive object to satisfy male needs and a self effacing female. Different critics have interpreted him differently. Kamala Sanskritayan, in her essay "The Women in Sarat Chandra's Literature," analyses Sarat Chandra's works in terms of characterization and its significance like this:

It was Sarat Chandra who helped to establish Indian literature side by side with contemporary European literature. Sarat Chandra sweeps away the traditional narrow-mindedness of the Indians. He has beautifully characterized Indian women especially Bengali women. His contribution is unchallenged and puts forward in a simple, clear, straight and strong argument his thoughts on

women. He excellently depicts what is pure, unexpressed and untold. In his novels the love and affection between his male and female characters is sexless and they live within a platonic love. (150)

She emphasizes Sarat Chandra's excellence of depiction of the then society. She links among contemporary socio- political scenario, female victimization and their identity crisis.

Patriarchy believes in the notion that value of women depends only on the love and affection, the sympathy and sacrifice of men. She also pours strong disagreement on the point that god has created women as weak and men must support in her weakness with his goodness which is written in so called Holy Scriptures.

In patriarchy, the rule of father not simply refers to a society where men hold power but refers to a certain kind of society governed by certain kind of men holding a certain kind of power. Patriarchy is a culture where driving ethos is an embodiment of masculine ideas and practices. It is a kind of society which reflects underlying value of traditional male idea. It determines maximum part of nature and characteristics of society and hierarchical relation between the sexes. Patriarchy always expects women to serve the male physically looking after homes, clothing , economically doing innumerable jobs for which women are ill paid or not paid at all; sexually, as wives, mistress or prostitutes; and reproductively, assuring man of paternity through the female chastity. In society men have controlled the conceptual arena and determine the social values.

Stereotype is a fixed idea or image that many people have of a particular type of person or thing, but which is often not true in reality, it may be cultural, gender and racial stereotypes. There was no physical and psychological reason why women should be inferior to man. Just as man considers himself superior to nature, so he considers superior himself. Because of such type of presentation women are stereotyped as incompetent, unintelligent, physically weak to man. In patriarchy women are stereotyped either good or bad. In other

words females are stereotyped as angle or witch, no middle position or status of human beings was given to women.

A burning issue is that even the media has generated male discourse in the society. Most of the means of communication have conservative sources. They represent women either as an ideal housewife, incompetent, nurturing or as a rational object but not as a human being having distinct identity. The press is increasingly responsible for supplying the information and images through which we understand our lives. The media plays a crucial role in shaping public conscious and public policy.

Simon de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, laid foundation for much of the feminist theories and political activism. The central argument of this book is that throughout the history women have always occupied a secondary position of "other" i.e. that which Violent says:

It is adjectival upon the substantial subjectivity and essential activity of man whereas man has been enable to transcend and control his environment, always furthering the domain of his physical and intellectual conquest women has remained imprisoned within immanence, remaining a slaves with the circle of duties imposed by her maternal and reproductive functions. (682)

These very lines show how subserviently women have been treated. To be a female means serving patriarchy under strict domination and male hegemony. Before marriage they suffered in the hands of their father and after marriage in the grasp of their husband, female have been victimized since the time immemorial.

Most of Sarat Chandra's critics have praised him a lot and they left credit for his contribution. Sarat Chandra's period was the period of renaissance movement in India. So, it was natural for him to give the space for women in different genres of literature. Along with literary giant Rabindranath Tagore, Sarat Chandra was the first to give voice for women

through literature. On the one hand, Sarat Chandra seems in the favor of female to uplift their position in the society. But on the other hand, he seems ambivalent while representing female characters. In the novel, most of the female characters are not in determinant roles. If he wanted to show female triumphant over patriarchy, he had to arrange a kind of revolt against patriarchy. He failed to do show and instead of this, his female protagonist Parineeta bows before the agent of patriarchy, Shekhar. It seems a kind of surrender before patriarchy not freedom and complete liberation of women.

Sarat Chandra wrote so many books including *Devdas*, *Parineeta* etc. and the remarkable thing is that most of his novels and stories revolve around female protagonist. He prefers female hero not male. As the general concept of protagonist, we mean bold strong and heroic actions leading to victory but his female protagonist are weak, submissive, having miserable condition and cut into divided psyche. A protagonist always struggles for his identity, becomes ready to take any risk, and sacrifices his life but never surrenders before evil power. On the contrary here Sarat Chandra's female protagonist bows and surrenders before evil patriarchy and confirms the traditional role of wife and mother. Here Sarat Chandra seems ambivalent. He has more politics while choosing female protagonist in the novel.

Although Sarat Chandra has tried to advocate women rights and literary independence to them, his representation and role structure does not allow them to exercise freedom in many ways. No people becomes great in himself rather contemporary time, space and the social environment equally contribute in it. Man's power of thinking and ideas are conditioned by the limits of time and space. So that it was not surprising for Sarat Chandra to write in favor of female freedom because his time was the time of renaissance in Bengal. In the introduction of this novel, Swagato Ganguly emphasizes on the balanced romantic aspect

of the novel, sacrifice of Girin and Shekhar-Lalita union through different turns and twists, barriers, religious conflict and cultural conflict. He opines:

In Austen's novels the balance between romance and respectability is finely maintained till the end, while Sarat Chandra causes romance to win out when Shekhar, shamed by Lalita's steadfastness and Girin's sacrifice in not taking advantage of his plight, cancels the rich marriage that was being planned for him and acknowledges his tie to Lalita. (4)

From the very beginning of human civilization women were considered as inferior, inessential and emotional being whereas man as superior, rational and intelligent. Patriarchal society has always been able to construct stereotypical images. These images are hypothetical and imaginative. Males always tag women in such a way that fits for patriarchal structure. Women are regarded as an erotic object in the society. For patriarchy women are an integral part of masculinity. Patriarchy assumes that women are irrational, incompetent, gossipy, silly, stupid, emotional, petty, dishonest and zoo of other ugly things. Such stereotypes culminate in the attitude that women must be dominated, controlled, subdued as well as abused. Malobika Chaudhary, the translator of the book *Parineeta* from the Bengali, views on the novel as:

Parineeta is a classic that has captured the imagination of generations of readers. Set in the early twentieth century Kolkata, *Parineeta* (Espoused) is the unforgettable story of a child-women's intense and bittersweet romance. Lalita an orphaned girl, who lives with her uncle, considers herself betrothed to Shekhar, her benefactor and guardian. After several failed attempts, Lalita finally gets the egotistical Shekhar to admit that he reciprocates her feeling. However tensions erupt between Shekhar's prosperous father and Lalita's poor but principled uncle, and the situation is further complicated by the

arrival on the scene of Girin, a mild mannered and eligible bachelor, who is attracted to Lalita. The lovers' world is turned upside down, and Shekhar and Lalita find themselves estranged. Years later, they meet again, and the story takes another unexpected turn... (1)

Malobika Chaudhary insists on *Parineta's* evergreen quality, lifelike characters and their romance. She emphasizes on the union of lovers in spite of cultural conflict and class difference between them. She insists on the union of two lovers through different upheavals, social barriers and obstacles.

No doubt Sarat Chandra is renowned fiction writer whose contribution is incomparable. He reflected the life and problems of his age in unique way. He is one of the major figures of Bengali Renaissance who brought new awakening collaborating with his colleague Rabindranath Tagore. He switched on the light of Renaissance in Bengal. He did not produce novels and stories merely for the entertainment of his readers or to quench the thirst of lovers but his novels were products of his long experience and expression of his ideas on some of the political, economic and social problems of life.

Sarat Chandra is of the opinion that the conflicts and social ills should be exposed through literature and he also suggests remedies for them. Sarat Chandra believes that love can transform human life. A women's life is essentially based on love and female existence is possible only through love. Most of the critics praised him because he has depicted social lives of rural Bengal beautifully and he is India's one of the best novelist of all times. He focused on human life and suffering associated with different evils and orthodoxies. He wanted to depict agony and pain of Bengali rural life but unfortunately he happened to slide out of track. While standing with the slogan of female independence, he could not do justice with his female characters. Indeed, the then society was plunged into different evil traditions but instead of proposing better solutions, he presented bereaved picture of women and girls.

His portrayal further intensified the subject matter. He is not a social reformist but merely a writer. He couldn't make drastic change willingly.

My research will be a critical analysis of those issues dragged out by the writer. The hidden politics behind his excavation of such portrayal of dark sides of society seems one-sided. His ambivalent nature promotes the backwardness, agony and female victimization etc. in the sense that he is not a policy maker or a social reformist but merely an interpreter. If he had advocated for female freedom, he should have to depict females negating patriarchal oppression and rebellion against the wretchedness of society. Instead of this his, projection of silent and submissive nature on women characters show that female independence and freedom is not possible like this. He advocates for patriarchy. During his period the society was swallowed by various kinds of viruses of inconsistencies and then he had no total freedom to advocate. Freedom and rights are not asked but should snatch, but Sarat Chandra strategically shows women's freedom through passive acceptance of male dominance. Freedom is possible only through rebellion and revolution. But his freedom here is ironical. I have tried to justify his ambivalence in depiction of female characters.

Sarat Chandra seems advocating for female freedom providing them literary independence. He tries to set new trends and mode of thinking in favor of females. He diplomatically selects Parineeta as protagonist but he fails to provide full freedom. Females are suffocated and suffered by inferiority complex. They can only realize how lowly creature they have been but they can't dare to challenge patriarchal norms and values. If they try to speak against patriarchy, either they are beaten mercilessly or burned alive. The way Sarat Chandra presents female characters in the novel is quite stereotypical. Some of Sarat Chandra's critics have appreciated and left him the credit for advocating female freedom, but some others have suspected on his strategy of choosing female protagonists in most of his novels. But it is necessary to research his hidden politics and point out negative aspect and

weaknesses. We can see no progress in his female characters more than passive acceptance of male notions. How can it be a female freedom? Female simply sublimates their desire with males and ultimately they surrender before patriarchy. He forgot the fact that transformation germinates from revolution. A male cannot advocate for the entire independence of women since he has to maintain patriarchal norms and values. It seems that the hidden intention behind choosing female protagonist in the novel is not for female freedom and independence from social ills and evils but to intensify the issue and strengthen the male superiority.

Indeed, Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay is a modern writer and novelist whose works are still fresh and relevant. He captures the burning issues like, fickleness of women, poverty-stricken rural life, dowry system, superstitions as well as evil social customs. Basically, the depiction of miserable condition of women and girls in the then patriarchal society is his main thrust. The unbearable pain, torture and suffering prison the lives of women, kill their creativity, and curtail their longing for freedom. Most of the girls in rural Bengal are obliged to marry in their childhood. Most of the rural girls are expected to look after their sibling and assist in household activities from their early childhood. Parents and guardians teach their daughters how to behave with her husband and teach how to make their family members happy in order to make her place safe in her husband's house. Women are always taught the concept of male superiority and are conditioned to cooperate in their subordination. Women's powerlessness is a consequence of this unequal gender relationship.

II. Female Stereotypes in *Parineeta*: A Textual Analysis

“Lalita was not independent, and the permission of her uncle and aunt would not suffice either” (13). This very extract from the novel *Parineeta*, clarifies the position of females in early twentieth century Bengali society. The then society was lingering in a kind of hodgepodge because of rigid caste system, child marriage, assassination of women and girls due to dowry system and superstition etc. which Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay beautifully depicts in the novel. He wants to expose those dark sides of the evil traditions by portraying some female characters like, Parineeta, Bhuvaneshwori etc. in the novel. Females have been scapegoats who are obliged to sacrifice their life in vain before patriarchy.

By examining the uncertainty, Sarat Chandra manifests in *Parineeta*, about questions of gender and identity, we should analyze it not only from the perspective of the then Bengali Society, but from the modern eye and side of fundamental rights of women too. Western culture has historically culturally and socio-economically privileged masculinity at the expense of femininity, constructing a hierarchy of gender in which the feminine value is taken as inferior, low temporal and negative. So, the Indian culture was not an exception in treating women and girls. The setting of the story is early twentieth century Bengali society where Sarat Chandra mentions a pathetic picture and difficulties faced by women and girls due to rigid gender roles. The attempt Parineeta and Shekhar make exchange their love to one another during their day to day life suggests a metaphor for the obstacle created by phallogocentric mode of thinking. In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Judith Butler talks about gender hierarchy and inequality like this:

The perversion of that very distinction between mind and body can be read as symptomatic of the very phallogocentric that Beauvoir underestimates, in the philosophical tradition that begins with Plato and continues through Descartes, Husserl, and Sartre. The cultural associations of mind with

masculinity and body with femininity are well documented within the field of philosophy and feminism. As a result any uncritical reproductions of the mind body distinction out to be rethought for the implicit gender hierarchy that the distinction has conventionally produced, maintained, and rationalized. (17)

In the above quote, Judith Butler pours her sharp discontent with philosophical trend that differentiated mind as masculinity and body as femininity. The hierarchical distinction is produced and maintained from Plato to the present. This is a consequence of phallogocentric mode of thinking and perverted patriarchy. According to her it should be rethought to erase this perversion.

In *Parineeta*, the whole plot or story revolves around the main characters Shekhar and Lalita. Being an orphan girl in her early childhood, Lalita takes shelter in her uncle, Gurucharan's house. Shekhar is next door neighbor and a spoiled, indecisive son of a wealthy industrialist, who initially shows sympathy and affection to Lalita. He is assigned for the guardianship of her. This is the preliminary phase of male domination or evil rule of patriarchy. Lalita seems in the deserted condition which is supposed to be irrigated by the love and affection of Gurucharan family. Sarat Chandra's projection of female characters in the novel seems like triumphant in a sense but the resolution clarifies that females have to surrender before the patriarchal system. Patriarchy tries to confirm all the females in their rules in one way or another. These lines are enough to show their oppression upon women:

With bowed head Lalita poured the tea as Gurucharan continued, "My dear, you have to labor very hard all the time in your poor Mama's household, don't you?" Lalita shook her head, "Why do you feel that only I work all the time, Mama? Everybody works and so do I." Now Gurucharan smiled, "So, Lalita tell me, who will be taking care of cooking today?" Looking up she answered, "Why Mama, I will manage!" (3)

Most of the women in Third World countries are brought up with the concept of innocence and silence which is the indication of good wife, good daughter-in-law and well brought women. Because of the internalization of such stereotypical roles women prefer to remain silent although they are beaten and humiliated. Such silence sometimes becomes very dangerous for women. Such mistreatments are rooted in traditional practices and institutional arrangements. Patriarchy always expects females obeying their rules and regulations. Sheila Ruth, in her text *Issues in Feminism*, discusses her opinion on female stereotype and its effect:

They all say that women as human being are substandard; less intelligent , less moral, less competent, less able physically, psychologically, . . . who are forced to live them the tragedy of female stereotype in that it impels women not only to appear substandard, but to become substandard; it moves to form us into the lathed monster. If the work of the stereotype be done. We are reduced to the weak, hopeless creatures. Life and personhood defined within such patriarchal constraints may be distorted. (96)

Shekhar rationalizes that Lalita's meekness, ignorance and her idiotic simplicity have led her to subservient condition in the daily livelihood, and does not look farther what unseen power drove him to look Lalita as a beautiful lady. The very first chapter of the novel clarifies how trivially the birth of a girl child has been taken. Even mother's status is not more than a child producing machine in Gurucharan's family. The arrival of girl child is taken as a devastating factor and a bad omen that ruins the whole family. The birth of a girl child is taken as a burden. How stereotypically they are represented we can see in the following lines:

If a thunderbolt had struck him down, he would have undoubtedly experienced searing pain. But the agony reflected on Gurucharan's visage was probably far greater when, right in the morning, he was brought the news that his wife had

safely delivered their fifth girl child. The joyful news had been heralded by his ten-years-old daughter Annakali. She said, “Baba, won’t you come and take a look?” Looking up at his daughter, Gurucharan said, “Just fetch me a glass of water, dear.” (1)

These lines represent the whole concept of the then society on women. Gurucharan is badly shocked and feels like falling from a cliff due to the news of his daughter’s birth. Due to blind faith on traditions and rigidity of the then society, people were obliged to lose all their property in the name of dowry.

Gurucharan was destructed by innumerable worries and problems when they began to overflow from last year that his house had been mortgaged in the auspicious occasion of his second daughter’s marriage. Though he was a bank clerk, salary was very poor. To maintain tradition and to continue social values he was obliged to follow the dowry system. In early twentieth century Bengali society, innumerable families had been plunged into dire poverty and more than fifty thousand women and girls were assassinated due to an inhuman system called dowry system. The kind of obsession of people with material possession and the blind faith on tradition had been a main factor causing violence and social hierarchy. In such a way girls were overburdened that they were treated not more than an object or like a non-entity. They were compared, expected, treated and taken as a commodity to spoil the family. They were like caged bird which speaks what his boss let him to speak. Such grim inhumane picture of the Bengali society can be observed throughout the novel. About masculine cultural practice and treatment of females in their culture in “*True Confession: The Thinking Muse: Feminism and Modern French Philosophy*,” Linda Singer suggests:

In patriarchy, male privilege is both marked and, at least, in part by control over the production, and representation of pleasure. Males always controlled and dominated females on the basis of their years old patriarchy, which they

claimed as their universal truth. Such control is operative...At the level of cultural representations which are designed to accommodate and normalizing masculine preferences and patterns of gratification. (145)

Singer, in the above extract opines that male privilege all powers and facilities. They generalize their norms as culture and represent females with their control and dominance over females.

Similarly, on the one hand, Garucharan had struck by the current of his newborn child, on the other, the responsibility to bring up a parentless child Lalita, adds fuel to the fire. Wholeheartedly he takes Lalita as a burden. He makes up his mind that it would be his duty to take care and handover certain property as dowry to her. Gurucharan suddenly remarked like this to conform Lalita in the patriarchal roles, "If only I could marry this blessed child of mine into an appropriate prosperous family, it would be a truly worthwhile achievement" (3).

Again Gurucharan expresses deep concern on Lalita that he should have to hand over huge amount of dowry because she is growing to marriageable age. He despised God because he had already been destroyed by poverty during the marriage of her daughters, so he has no property now. He goes on saying like this:

"I also know that one out to celebrate! But, young man, even God has not been very fair. I am poor why so much bounty - but that doesn't matter, it doesn't upset me in the least. But just think of this - this orphan, this Lalita of mine- this golden child is only fit for royalty. How do I give her away in marriage to just anybody? If innumerable jewels like the Kohinoor that grace the crown were heaped together, they would still fall short when compared to my child."

(4-5)

Gurucharan compares Lalita merely with royalty or dowry and expresses his sharp discontent with God for not being very fair to him. He thinks the God is responsible for his present worse condition. Here he seems pessimistic and fatalist.

Time and again, Guracharan requests Shekhar to find a suitor for Lalita. The burning factor to heighten tension and pushing into dire poverty is other than female factor which is closely associated with dowry system. He says like this, “Shekharnath just look around in year circles of friends. May be something can be done for this girl. I have heard that there are some boys who don’t think so much of money or dowry” Guracharan continued, “Don’t forget, my boy, keep it in mind. Ever since she turned eight Lalita has been studying and growing up under your guidance. You have seen yourself what an intelligent, sensitive and disciplined girl she is just a sup of child and from today it is she who will be doing all the cooking, serving-everything in her hands” (5-6). The above extract shows that patriarchy always treats female as a burden. Such trend helps to increase the hierarchical gap between male and female from which the pathetic condition of women will be analyzed in different chapter of the novel. They often associate females with negative images like sensitive, emotional, irrational, dangerous etc. The significant thing is that male chauvinism never provides independence for females but forcefully tries to assert their identify maintaining patriarchal rules.

This sort of male satisfaction is not the sexual. Like other novels of Sarat Chandra, in this novel too, there is no place for sex. On the contrary, there are psychological, spiritual and cultural upheavals in the novel. Lalita is obliged to survive under patriarchal pressure and domination. She can do nothing without the order and permission of Shekhar, who is the agent of patriarchy. She is supposed to dance according to the tune of patriarchy. Lalita is innocent because she is not mature enough. But she lost her fundamental rights of enjoying childhood. Lalita is a child without a childhood. As a guardian and benefactor Shekhar

assumes to pioneer her. A matrimonial alliance for him had been proposed from a wealthy family but his mother Bhuvaneshwari dismissed it. Later Shekhar prepares himself for the inspection of a prospective bride. A kind of query takes place between Shekhar and Lalita. She asked, "Are you going to choose a bride?" Turning around Shekhar replied, "Ah there you are! Help me to dress such that my bride chooses me!" Lalita coughed and responded "I don't have time today, Shekhar *da*—I have just come for some money" (9).

Shekhar requests Lalita for the collaboration in dressing him beautifully though she simply shows her busy condition. This can be understood as a kind of unexpressed but true and blooming love between them. Shekhar feels uneasy in doing many things in her absence. His indecisiveness is increasing day by day which is shown as the consequence of his long alliance with Lalita. Judith Butler, in her book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* says:

For feminist theory, the development of language that fully or adequately represents women. This has seemed . . . women's lives were either misrepresented or not represented at all. The oppression upon women resulted into the feminist movement which is caused by universal or hegemonic structure of patriarchy or masculine domination. Feminism thus opens itself to charges of gross misrepresentation. Gender hierarchy and distinction has conventionally produced, maintained and rationalized. (7)

According to Butler, in the development process of language and culture, women are entirely misrepresented or not represented. So, the feminist movement should challenge the patriarchal domination which they have produced and maintained since the time immemorial.

Females are always shown to be a supporting material, dependent and gaping for help. Lalita is resigned to her fate and presented mature beyond her years. When her uncle's wife falls ill, she is able to take over the household duties efficiently which include the cooking,

washing etc. Lalita, for her part, is totally devoted to Shekhar. She cleans his room, mends his clothes and runs household tasks for his mother. Sometimes, Lalita is in the state of ambivalence. She can't decide what to do and what not to do. She is often confused by the vague and mysterious remarks of Shekhar:

Lalita said, "I am taking money whenever I need it but how will it all be repaid?" Shekhar reported it will not be repaid Lalita, on the contrary it is being repaid." Not understanding, Lalita looked on blankly. "You don't understand?" Lalita shook her head "No!' Grow up a little more and you will," saying which Shekhar puts on his shoes and left. (9)

This conversation clarifies that women are conditioned to remain in the state of indecisiveness, vulnerability, terror and dependency because of patriarchal ambivalence. The powerful weapon of male dominating and running over female is male ego and feeling of superiority. Purity, chastity, devotion, innocence are tagged upon women.

According to patriarchal rules females should be cool and passive but not aggressive or revolutionary. It is a kind of exclusion and a well-planned strategy to lengthen the dominance of patriarchy. Sheila Ruth, in her text *Issues in Feminism* discusses her opinion on female stereotype and its effect:

They all say that women as human being are substandard; less intelligent , less moral, less competent, less able physically, psychologically, . . . who are forced to live them the tragedy of female stereotype in that it impels women not only to appear substandard, but to become substandard; it moves to form us into the lathed monster. If the work of the stereotype be done. We are reduced to the weak, hopeless creatures. Life and personhood defined within such patriarchal constraints may be distorted. (96)

Shekhar has a stereotypical belief that women are merely an object of romance and entertainment. Lalita appears to be a loyal, innocent and submissive to Shekhar though he idealizes Lalita as an innocent and little lady. This signifies the masculinity of Shekhar and Lalita as a mere entertainer and a puppet as in the following lines:

Shekhar questioned, "Has come to see you? But isn't she supposed to be cooking in her Mama's house?" "But why should she cook at all?" asked his mother. Surprised, Shekhar responded, "Who else will do the cooking in that house? Even her uncle said the other day that she would have to see to the cooking and all the housework now." (11-12)

This dialogue shows that patriarchy always expects women to be the driver of oven or they should confine within household activities. This compulsion is no other than the perversion of patriarchy and it is main obstacle for women's bright future.

Bengali women are being thrice alienated on the basis of caste, class and gender. The so called low caste women experience two distinct forms of patriarchal control. One form of domination is by so called Brahminical patriarchal system and the other is within their caste. In Bengali community men see their women as sexual property and source of income. In this context it seems relevant to mention Jyotiba Pule, EV Ramaswamy Naickert (Periar) and B. R. Ambedkar, who were all non-Brahminical political leaders and questioned the values of the upper caste. According to them, Hindus are responsible for the ritual stigmatization and political disorder that characterize caste exploitation. All of them were much concerned with gender and underlined the link between caste oppression and the oppression of women. Intermarriage was the most important way of annihilating the caste system. For them, breaking the caste rule of kinship alone would undo untouchability. If females were in favor of inter-caste marriages, caste ideologies didn't permit them to do so. Sarat Chandra's novel resembles with this.

Sarat Chandra himself belonged to a poor Brahmin family, witnessed the miseries and wretchedness of poverty. In the novel too, he has provided so many instances of traditional, rigid and orthodox caste system. Bengali society was highly based on caste system. Having born in a poor family or in a so-called lower caste, people had to lead a life of a dog and high caste were exercising power as a lion. About the assertion of patriarchy and caste system to Lalita the following conversation is strategically woven in the novel:

Bhuvaneshwari laughed aloud, "Her uncle! What he said then is hardly relevant. She is not even married yet—who will eat what she has cooked?" she need not get bothered by all that. I have sent over our Brahmin cook, that lady will see to everything. Your sister-in-law is doing our cooking so there is no need to worry about food and such matters." (12)

The above extract is a burning example of the then caste system. It also shows that how much rigid were so called Brahmins and how they were trapped in narrow caste system.

There was a great hierarchy between rich and poor, male and female etc. in the then society. Poor people were treated not as human beings but as trivial things. Basically, poor were victimized due to dowry system. There was nothing worse than to be a poor. To be poor is not a curse by birth but because of blind social faith and orthodox caste system; it had been more than this. At the time of *Parineeta's* publication in early twentieth century India, women were calculated and distinguished in terms of caste. Basically low caste women charged Indian feminism for not embracing all women and the practices of caste prevailed in the then society that produce a significant inequality among women.

When Lalita and Shekhar first get introduced, Lalita was quiet innocent and unknown with the concept of love, romance, friendship etc. since she was a child. Shekhar obviously knew about Lalita because he was a mature man and a lawyer of twenty-four. He enjoys the company of Lalita as an inspiring and refreshing element in his daily life. Though Lalita is of

childish nature, Shekhar never tries to understand her. He treats her merely as an innocent girl and like a doll. Shekhar never understands her condition and her inner attitudes which is nipped in the bud and swallowed by poverty.

Time and again, Shekhar makes Lalita a scapegoat by the evil practices of patriarchy. In one way or another patriarchy expects women to be guided by their rules and regulations. Lalita is not aware that her femininity is commodified and she can't revolt against it. Consciously or unconsciously she is internalizing the kind of male hegemony. Though Shekhar doesn't use physical force to control her, but an inner psyche of Lalita gets startled because of Shekhar's presence.

Lalita is supposed to go to the theatre with some others in a short while. "She stood and waited for Shekhar's permission. She can't dare anything without Shekhar's permission. No one had instructed her to do so, nor was there any reason for this" (13). She left no stone untouched to please Shekhar and her uncle's family but she could not. These lines show Lalita's position. Lalita was not independent, and the permission of her uncle and aunt would not suffice either. "We are going to the theatre!" Lalita then raised her voice slightly and said, "They are all waiting for me!" (13).

Females are not free as males in the patriarchal society. The attitude of society towards male and female is quite different. Lalita is living a fragmented self and she thinks herself as weak because she is an orphan. She can't live her early life happily because she is isolated physically, psychologically and emotionally from her parents. Women are alienated from their own self in the novel. They can observe the power and freedom of male but they themselves are trapped within the patriarchal norms and parochial social values where they are killing their own desire and living for the desire of other. Therefore they have been suffering from identity crisis. Their self is not their own original self. Their originality, thinking and feeling do not make any sense in their real life. So a woman's self is dying,

artificial, constructed and dictated self. They are separated from their own self. It's similar with separating head from body and mind from emotions. They are treated so trivially more than an animal. Males always control and dominate females. In this context Judith Butler opines:

Foucault points out that juridical of power produce the subjects they subsequently come to represent. Juridical notions of power appear to regulate political life in purely negative terms—that is, through the limitation, prohibition, regulation, control, and even “protection” of individuals related to that political structure through the contingent and retractable operation of choice. (5)

This shows female as real victims of patriarchal norms, values and attitudes. They are like puppets in the hands of male members of the society. Females have to do what male want because they are totally dependent on male for survival or existence.

Lalita puts herself at the stake of patriarchy, performing a role of an orphan girl who is doing whatever Shekhar wants. She does not possess her own unique identity, so much so that, even to enjoy playing cards in leisure time, she has to take permission from Shekhar. The dependence of Lalita and Shekhar's control over her can be viewed in the following lines:

Shekhar asked, “What is the matter?”

Slightly aggrieved, Lalita responded, "At last you hear me! We are going to the theatre.”

Shekhar asked, “Who is we?”

“Annakali, Charubala, Mama and I”

“Who is this Mama?”

Lalita answered, "His name is Girin Babu; he came here about five days back; he has come from Munger to study for his gradation from here-a fine person!"

(13)

The above dialogue shows that females have no stable identity. It depends on patriarchy. The love, affection, friendship etc. change if the agent of patriarchy changes. The changing identity of women becomes most horrible part of their life. In order to gain love, sympathy etc. females are shown as willing to lose their own identity.

Slowly and gradually queries between Shekhar and Lalita transfer into a close relationship. Being much older than she, Shekhar is very protective towards Lalita and the two had an agreement that Lalita could help herself to money from Shekhar's money box whenever she desires, which was a habit that started when they were kids and continued it till adulthood. Lalita is entirely dedicated to him. They do not want to be away from each other's sight. A kind of inner psyche inspires them to visualize and collaborate with their happenings. Lalita is highly obedient to Shekhar. Everything should be justified before Shekhar. It is out of question to go without permission of Shekhar. Happiness and furiousness are inalienable parts of life. Something Shekhar gets irritated. The following conversation shows his boring phase. Remaining silent for a couple of minutes, she said, "Only this one time, Shekhar da, may I go?" Putting book aside Shekhar said harshly, "Lalita, if you want to, please go, you are old enough to decide what to do, why ask me all this?" (15).

Marry Wollstonecraft has discussed the pernicious effect of sentimental novels of her time in 18th century. She attacks sentimental novels because they killed women's intellectual and mental development. Due to these novel's stereotypical representations like emotional, irrational, docile to their works etc. women's can't exercise their intellectuality but are trapped in the sentimentality. Wollstonecraft's concern in literature is the characterization of women character in the literary works. She opines:

Everything that they see or hear serves to fix impression, call forth emotions and associates ideas that give a sexual character to the mind. False notion of beauty and delicacy stop the growth of their limbs and produce a sickly soreness, rather than delicacy of organs: and thus weakened by being employed in unfolding...It is unreasonable as well as cruel, to upbraid them with faults that can be avoided unless degree of negative vigor be supposed, that falls to be lot of very few amongst mankind. (395-96)

Lalita, the female protagonist, comes across not like a person but like a piece of furniture. Her uncle, Shekhar and all the other male characters in the novel ponder over questions like: where can she be put? What is to be done with her? Who will take charge of her? Who can she be married to? Which house can she be moved to next? It is as if to be female is to be a non-entity, with no voices, opinions and choices. Her life is not hers to decide what to do with her desires, she does not decide where she wants to go or not go. Worst of all, women are devoid of strength and will power. Indeed, many women have their own pot of venom and can spit like a cobra when they need. But they almost never use it in self- defense. That strength is used to uphold traditional notions to defend family honor, sustain the community even when those very elements negate them.

Lalita is a passive girl whose disjointed self entertains Shekhar. In the middle part of the novel, because of the entrance of another gentleman Girin, their company nearly gets distracted, and that event jeopardized Shekhar. The entire point of Sarat Chandra's novel is that females should overcome narrow patriarchal boundaries of patriarchy to ensure freedom and equal opportunity. But unfortunately, he happened to project female characters into a restricted space, which finally have to surrender or defeat before patriarchy. Lalita's thousand requests to join with friends turned into ashes due to Shekhar's negligence and patriarchal status quo. A kind of trauma and humiliation starts burning her. This is like this:

But now, not only was that liberty so abruptly curtailed but the reason behind it was a cause of such shame that Lalita had never experienced in all her thirteen years; she felt it with every iota of her being. Wiping her eyes brimming over with tears Annakali asked, “What is the matter, Lalita *di*?” “My head aches, I feel nauseous... very sick”, saying which Lalita turned over to face the wall. (16)

Women need to be fresh, young and beautiful to attract males. It is not their quality and their ability that is appreciated, but it is the utilitarian value that is counted. In the relationship with Shekhar, Lalita willingly renders herself devoid of choice. All her decisions and activities are dictated by his wants and moods. If her going out for a movie with her friends displeases him, then eventually, she obeys his whim. Lalita is always bovine and sweet-tempered. She has all but trashed her sense of self and individuality, and happily submits to the whim of her male counterpart, her family and society, serving them all diligently and allowing them to do with her life whatever they please.

The male protagonist Shekhar is almost a mirror opposite -self seeking, irresponsible, and thick skinned and narcissistic. He believes that the world, including his family and the female protagonist are there to serve him and submit to his will. Though this, in a nutshell, it is Sarat Chandra's idea of a male female relationship, but the way his portrayal of female characters seems quite stereotypical. Girin takes nice opportunity of fishing in muddy water. He stretches the hand of alliance when Lalita is in tense mood. He remarks:

"You sent over the money yesterday, but did not accompany us; why don't we go again tomorrow?" Shaking her head, Lalita mildly replied, “No, I was very sick,” Smiling Girin said, “You have recovered now, tomorrow is an absolute must.” “No, no, tomorrow I will have no time,” Lalita made a rapid exit. (18)

Male characters in the novel *Parineeta* treat female character as commodities. They have control over women. Women are possessed by them just as property. Treating a woman like property is the tendency of the males which is deeply rooted in patriarchal norms and values. On the other hand, female characters of the novel are in dilapidated condition without self-respect. They are living in pathetic condition. It is only because of the mercilessness of patriarchal system. Shekhar as being a male member of the society need not worry about his misdeeds. His irresponsibility and poor realization etc. are still functioning powerfully because he is an agent of patriarchy. Lalita is immersed in a kind of embarrassment that distracted her. She has been like a cat on a hot tin roof. In the middle of ill-treatment, she could not help serving patriarchy because her option had already been deleted in her early childhood. So, she could not avoid her daily works and responsibilities. Males are represented as generous, social worker and good but females are depicted as meek, innocent and beautiful. How obedient and loyal she has been these lines show as:

Since childhood she was the one to see to all the small chores of his room-clearing away the clutter of books, keeping the table neat and tidy and seeing to it that pens were clean and ink kept ready for use; no one also did all this - this was Lalita's prerogative and responsibility. She started the process of tidying up immediately, so as to be done before Shekhar returned. On losing her parents at the age of eight, Lalita had become a part of her uncle's household; since then, like a younger sibling, she had moved in an orbit around Shekhar and progressed in her studies under his tutelage. (19)

All were aware that Lalita has occupied a special place in Shekhar's affection but no one knew the depth of their affection. Neither she, nor Shekhar nor Bhavaneshwari had thought the possibility that one day Lalita might take her place as young bride of the household. Shekhar now cares her more than earlier. He knows Lalita only too well, because

she has brought up in close association with him. Shekhar wants her from the core of his heart. He said "There you are! So, how late did you return yesterday?" Irritated, Shekhar dismissed her, "Go downstairs, Mother wants you." He said, "How long will you keep standing? I will take some time Just put it down and go" Lalita was getting irked and said, "It does not matter if it is late, I don't have any work downstairs," She left and Shekhar called after her, "Come and see me in the evening" (20-21).

Though Lalita had gone to the theatre in Shekhar's permission, he is scolding her till now. He doesn't want her going out. It can be understood as a misuse of patriarchy and his desire of being together with her. Lalita is feeling a kind of insult, puzzling etc. which Shekhar's activities are showing. Either by the difference of age, caste and education or by the social boundaries, Lalita feels the relation is being reduced between them.

These days, Shekhar-Lalita relationship is getting weak because of Shekhar's mental torture, dominance and arrogance over Lalita. Their queries and meetings have been sparse these days. Lalita's alliance is slightly inclined with Girin these days. Girin's gentleness attracts Lalita. Slowly and gradually, Lalita- Girin relationship gets stronger while playing cards. Lalita was absent in the card session because her mood betrayed her, and Girin suffers more. Her absence brings a wave to Girin, which is like this. These past two days Girin had been to some extent restless and absentminded. He would enter the house and wander about purposelessly from room to room. He said, "Didi, today too there will be no game? Didi why don't you send for Lalita?" (26). Girin suspects that if Lalita is forbidden to come there. He wants Lalita personally and suddenly conscious of his eagerness for Lalita's Company, he immediately falls embarrassed. In this context of female representation and oppression Gayatri Spivak opines:

The question is not of female participation in insurgency, or the ground rules of the sexual division of labor, for both of which there is "evidence". It is,

rather, that, both as object of colonialist historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. If in the contest of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow. (32)

Spivak focuses that males are dominant only because of the ideological construction of gender. On the basis of that construction, they create gender roles and due to that basically subalterns have no access in mainstream and decision-making.

Lalita is portrayed here like an object or commodity which transfers from one agent of patriarchy to another. Girin is eager to know about Shekhar. He is anxious to Gurucharan's present miserable condition, and manages rest of his daughter's as well as Lalita. He says to Manorama, "But Didi, Gurucharan Babu also has other daughter, how will he marry them then off?" (29). Manorama is also represented stereotypically. She seems full of anxiety, chicken-hearted and weeping. She charges Lalita that she did not have any idea of what could be arrange or how. She is worried about Lalita's marriage and thinks Girin a suitable person for Lalita. It is truly very difficult to find a gem of a girl like Lalita. Girin is interested to provide money for Gurucharan to regain his mortgaged house from Nabin Roy and to marry of his daughters including Lalita too.

Pondering on the matter Manorama could only say, "I really do not know what to think. But it is certainly true that the boys are not tight-fisted like their father; they have taken after their mother and have a kind of disposition and are religious minded too. Girin said, "If he is willing to accept, I am ready to give the money. Lalita is nobody of theirs and nobody of ours, either; what does it matter, if I bear the entire expenses of her weddings?"(28-29). The above extract clarifies that consciously and deliberately, males are represented as generous, socialworker and good. The politics behind this donation might be either the money is black or the belief that it ensures Girin's marriage with Lalita.

Females are depicted as meek, innocent and beautiful. Females are exploited on the basis of their beauty. Girin's this step seems as an inclination towards Lalita in the name of kindness. Girin stretches the hand of alliance with Lalita but the hidden politics behind it, is still mysterious. Girin suspects Lalita that the manner in which Lalita spends money is not at all like one poverty-stricken; her expenses are nothing less than twenty- five rupees a month. Lalita is spending all the money which is provided by Shekhar, means she is donated or operated by patriarchy. Lalita is presented here like this, "Lalita is supposed to be an extremely nice girl" (31).

The whole society is running after property or material possession. They treat merely females as commodities to obtain dowry or a means to cause poverty. They expect a great amount of dowry when a boy's marriage is arranged. People do not consider what sort of horrible consequences dowry invites. Female are doubly marginalized and exploited, before marriage, in the hand of their father, and after in the hands of their husband. In many ways they are ill-treated or burned alive in allegation of fewer dowries. These lines suggest as, "Isn't Shekhar supposed to be getting married this winter? I believe the old man will collect a huge amount of dowry." Females are judged only in terms of poverty bringing factor and a method of collecting property. All these are the heartlessness of society, illogical persecutions and tortures. Gurucharan pours his dissatisfaction to society like this, "A society does not sympathize with the poor, does not help in moment of crisis and can only threaten and punish—such a society is not for me, or for those who are like me; it is a society for the rich. Fine, let the rich remain, there is nothing in such a society for us" (33).

Female members in the society or in family are shown as a burden. By analyzing this novel from the critical eye, we can get a point that females can't contribute the family positively. They are created only to satisfy male needs. They have no access in decision-making. They are voiceless and monolithically isolated and categorized as a child producing

machine and object for entertainment. Their feelings emotions are not judged but repressed and made them obliged to worship their husbands as God.

Females are taken as the main factor causing poverty and social hierarchy. Due to the lack of enough awareness and disrespect of human rights, early twentieth century Bengali society was rigid and based on conservatism. These lines show what sort of space females occupy in the family and society:

Gurucharan was becoming so agitated primarily because of her, he was almost forgetting to eat or drink so overburdened was he, her peace -loving Mama, he was in such turmoil only because he had taken her under his wing! If he didn't get her married off soon, he would become a social outcast, for harboring an overage unmarried woman. (34)

The above extract shows the miserable condition of women and girls due to evil traditions and dowry system. The wretchedness of society is that if someone keeps an overage unmarried woman, society ostracizes them. Bengali women are being thrice alienated on the basis of caste, class and gender. The low caste women experience two distinct form of patriarchal control: a dominant form of Brahminical patriarchy that rests on conception of caste, purity as well as patriarchal control, and control within the Bengali community. There men see their women as sexual property. In this context Anupama Rao, in her book *Gender and Caste* describes:

Indian Feminism has tended to represent the interests and concerns of upper caste women rather than reflect the experiences of Indian women. By recognizing this fact and by fostering alternatives ideas of feminism and caste relations, Indian feminism can more effectively challenges historically entrenched and varied patriarchies. (2)

Rao pours sharp discontent to Indian Feminism that it discriminates common women by excluding their experiences. It includes only so called high class women.

The depiction of female is more than stereotypical. Males excessively dominate females. They always use the politics of forbidding females. These lines clarify the stereotypical notion upon female as:

One day Girin asked, “Don’t you have tea, Lalita?”

Lowering her eyes, Lalita shook her head;

Gurucharan replied, “Her Shekhar *da* has forbidden it. He doesn’t like women drinking tea.” (34-35)

Gurucharan,s house had been mortgaged because he handed over all his property while marrying his daughters. In the meantime, Girin thinks of helping Gurucharan to drag out of that plight. Girin shows interest in alleviating his poverty by providing money. It flashes the light of hope to Gurucharan. He asked slowly, “You will pay the entire sum of money?” Girin very diffidently said, “Yes, if that will ease you of some of your burdens...” (37)

Girin’s this step seems remarkable and relevant in this context. Females are treated not more than an object. Though Lalita is a child, she is supposed to be a marriageable girl and for that including Girin, another boy come to see for Lalita. Gurucharan wanted to hand over Laltia to someone because he wants to get rid of his burden as soon as possible. The powerlessness and wretchedness of being a female made obliged for Lalita to escape the conversation since women often feel embarrassment talking on matrimonial matters. Gurucharan mentions her in stereotypical manner. He said, “She is bound to do that; after all, Lalita is becoming worldly- wise now.” A deep shy escaped him and continued, “My little one is a perfect blend of homeliness and intelligence, such a bride is hard to come by, Shekharnath” (47).

Sarat Chandra's treatment of female characters seems biased in nature which has inspired the readers to sympathize on their plights and miseries. His female characters are depicted not with their own independent identity, rather they are always dependent and self humiliated. His female characters Parineeta and Bhuvaneshwari are somehow alienated and frustrated. They are operated by patriarchy. They do not revolt against the injustice upon them but bounded themselves in the masculine assumptions, social norms and values. Lalita shrinks into herself in embarrassment and a groom was indeed sought in earnest for Lalita. Including Girin, another groom had been visited to Lalita but all proved unworthy to her because Shekhar seems fixed suitor to her (46). Most of the women in the Third World countries are brought up with the concept of innocence and silence which is the indication of good wife, good daughter-in-law and well brought women. Because of the internalization of such stereotypical roles and images, women prefer to remain silent though they are beaten and humiliated. Such silence sometimes becomes very dangerous for women. Such mistreatments are rooted in traditional practices and institutional arrangements. In this context Ketu Karthak says:

Key controls of female sexuality are located in the arena of "cultural tradition" particularly when women are expected to be the "guardians of tradition" in anti-colonial struggles. Further, "traditions" most oppressive to women are located within the arena of female sexuality- not only the glaringly violent ones such as sati, but other more normative forms of objectification in customs like dowry, multiple childbearing, as well as in fulfilling traditionally expected roles as daughter, wife and mother. (11)

Karthak argues that the oppression, domination, and control over women are deeply rooted in culture or tradition. The major causing factor of oppression upon women is their sexuality.

The role structure of women as mother, wife and daughter are controversial. Women's plight is caused by dowry and sati etc. and they are treated merely as childbearing machine.

Lalita escaped from tea session and went straight to Shekhar's room. Even his entrance made her speechless in fright and amazement. In *Parineeta*, the rays of patriarchy are splattered in every part of female characters. The kind of male superiority and ego has created a kind of hegemony in female psyche. Though Shekhar seemed like a virtual stranger for Lalita. She immersed into a deep feeling and wanted to be one with Shekhar. Her long proximity with Shekhar or her fate killed her creativity and closed other alternative ways. There was no way out except to be united with him. Shekhar asked, "What are you doing Lalita?" Not answering, Lalita came closer, grasped his hands and asked tearfully, "What is the matter, Shekhar *da*?" Angrily Lalita said, "Go on!" Shekhar said, "Go on. I understand it is a matter of embarrassment for you to discuss your marriage with me, but tell me honestly, what my condition will be?" (48-50). A kind of serious conversation takes place between Shekhar and Lalita. No longer has she remained an unmarried. These lines show her married status according to Hindu religion: "with the sole purpose of startling him, she quickly slipped the garland around his neck and immediately hid behind the couch" (52).

Lalita's act of garlanding Shekhar signifies their full-fledged love which according to Hindu religion is a most important step of marriage (52). This is the climax of the novel *Parineeta* or we can say it is a milestone of Shekhar-Lalita relationship. At that occasion, not only physically but psychologically too, Lalita seems asserting as mistress of Shekhar. "Lalita knelt at Shekhar's feet to offer her respectful salutations before she left. Then she enquired gently, "Now, tell me, what am I to do?" (56). They both enjoyed their year old unexpressed blooming love converting into ecstasy and bliss. Shekhar hesitated for a moment and then, extending both hands, brought her close and bending a little touched his lips lightly to hers.

“After tonight you will not have to be told, you will know what to do, Lalita.” Shekhar realized that Lalita is an inevitable part of his life.

She is like oxygen to him without which he can't breathe. She is more innocent than a child. Moving away, she asked, “Did you revolt in this manner simply because I garlanded you?” Smiling, Shekhar disagreed, “No I have been reflecting on this for a number of days, but couldn't come to any conclusion. Today I have come to this decisive step because I realized that it was impossible for me to live without you.” Lalita answered, “But your father will be very angry” (57). We can see a kind of caste conflict between diehard Hindu and Brahmo creed. Swagato Ganguly in the introduction of *Parineeta* says:

Compared to the heroes of Tagore's fiction, who are mostly serious and reflective people, Sarat Chandra's heroes act on impulse and can appear vacillating, indecisive, and even, petulant. While the man manifest a certain emotional indiscipline, women are subjected to a ritual discipline the leaves them slightly demented, representing various shades of the Victorian 'madwomen in the attic' syndrome. (3)

One night moon was glittering and Shekhar and Lalita were together, while helping Shekhar to get dressed, she playfully places a garland around Shekhar's neck, (in Hindu wedding the exchange of garlands is considered highly auspicious, which bears the same significance as an exchange of rings in western tradition). It was such an auspicious day, when Lalita has inadvertently initiated a marriage with Shekhar. After this Lalita eyes started smarting with tears of hurt, shame and embarrassment. She was old enough to know just how lowly and insignificant she was. She was fully conscious of the fact that everybody was tender and caring with her only because she was an orphan. As time goes by, Shekhar is embarrassed by the exchange of garlands with 14-year old Lalita and how seriously she takes

her role as his wife. He is afraid of people finding them in such condition and what his parents might say especially as Lalita's uncle in having converted from Hinduism to Brahmo has deemed himself unworthy in their eyes.

In early twentieth century India, which is when this book was written there was a rigid caste system. It is only after Shekhar's dad, the patriarch of the house, dies then Shekhar has the courage to acknowledge without shame to the world that Lalita is his rightful wife. At last Shekhar agrees to marry with Lalita. Sarat Chandra has represented female characters so stereotypically that females have no their distinct identity. At his time, people were obliged to convert their religion to escape the huge amount of dowry.

Bhuvaneshwari is in the favor of transformation since she has realized her miserable condition brought by dowry. She remarks, "Nothing ever remains the same forever, Shekhar. If the question of dowries for daughters became a reason for giving up one's religion, many others would have to do the same. The almighty looks after all those whom He has sent below" (60). Bhuvaneshwari is still unknown about the exchange of garlands between Shekhar and Lalita. She is extremely anxious of Lalita, a parentless girl and hopes for her better future and she thinks Girin to be an appropriate person to her: Wiping her own tears with the end of her sari, Bhuvaneshwari said, "It is all fate, Shekhar, fate. No one can undo what fate has in store—whom can I blame? At least Girin is a good boy and well to do. Lalita will not suffer" (61). Females are obliged to survive under humiliation, dilemma, horror and a kind of trauma in patriarchal society. Sarat Chandra has depicted females in such a way that they have never seen the ray of happiness and tranquility. To associate them with negative images and depriving them from fundamental rights is no other than stereotypical representation. The following dialogue clarifies vagueness, uncertainty and the state of terror:

“I cannot sleep at night for worry and fright. Honestly! Isn't it scary? You were not here and neither was Ma. Look at the absurd things Mama sometimes does! Now what if mama refuses to accept me?” Shekhar fell silent for a while and then said, “Yes true, Ma will not want to accept you. She has heard that your uncle has accepted a lot of money from another. Besides, now all of you are Brahmos and we are Hindus.” Shekhar asked, “Where will you get all the money from?” Looking up once at Shekhar and remaining silent for a while, Lalita said, “Don't you know where a woman gets money from? That's where I will get it from too.” (65)

Lalita is in a dilemma that if Shekhar's parent refused to accept, her future will be vague. She is in the state of confusion too. Sometimes she talks mysteriously about getting money. She is living in a kind of horror and terror. She is restless in day and night, and seems devoid of hunger and thirst. All these premonitions emerge from the rigidity of patriarchy. She immersed in the thought that if she is refused as Shekhar's wife due to religious difference, what will her condition be.

These past couple of months, while Shekhar was away from home and without Lalita's company, he had not seen beyond the balance sheet of imagined joys and sorrows, material gains and losses, that had occupied his mind. But now it had become clear to him what a vital role Lalita had always played in his life, the indispensable part she had occupied in his future planes, how difficult to survive without her, how painful- Shekhar brooded relentlessly on all this as he lay stretched out on the bed. Perhaps because Lalita had grown up as a part of his family since childhood, Shekhar had never thought of singling her out particularly from amongst his parents or brothers and sisters. But there always had been a nagging concern in his mind that perhaps he might not be able to marry Lalita. His parents would, in all possibility, consent to this marriage, perhaps she would belong to another- his

mind ran in continual circles around this anxiety. Hence, before leaving Kolkata, he had tried to stem the flood of his worries by garlanding Lalita at the auspicious hour (67). About the inevitability and significance of love and kiss one quotation is given in *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations & Proverbs*, it suggests as: “If love is the best thing in life, than the best part of love is the kiss.”(Thomas Mann-1999) “Love interior to life, posterior to death, initial of creation, and the exponent of breath (Emily Dickinson-Love is Interior to Life) (55).

The news of Gurucharan’s converting to another religion had filled him with the greatest disquietitude and an overwhelming fear of losing Lalita. He experienced a searing pain. Shekhar himself asserted, “What was inevitable has happened—neither can you ignore it nor can I.” That night, a glowing moon had graced the sky, moonlight had flooded the surroundings, a garland had adorned his loved one and there had been the thrill of the first physical proximity to his beloved; there had been the intense intoxication of tasting the sweetness of his sweetheart’s lips” (68).

As a member of patriarchy, Shekhar is not only jealous of Lalita’s purity and sanctity but he also has tested the sweetness of Lalita’s lips. He cannot imagine his existence without Lalita. There was a talk of her marriage to Girin, but it would be impossible for anybody to get her to consent. It was just not feasible that she remain silent! She would definitely reveal all. Shekhar’s face became flushed. Truly! He had not only exchanged garlands, but pulling her close had even kissed her! She had not prevented him, because she felt that there was nothing wrong in this and he had a right to do what he did. Now whom could Shekhar answer to for his actions? (69).

Shekhar-Lalita relationship goes on deepening in such a way that there seems no other way out then their marriage, but unfortunately because of patriarchal restrictions Lalita can’t express her deep love and devotion to Shekhar. How trivially women’s wishes and desires are taken, these lines show as, Shekhar told, “After all, any woman would naturally be

embarrassed about making such revelation.” He had heard that “women would rather die than talk of such matters” (70).

Though Shekhar remained in close proximity with Lalita, he was nobody for her at the moment of crisis. Girin was a provider of future shelter for Lalita. Shekhar even tried to convince himself that Lalita had behaved in that manner with Girin out of embarrassment regarding her secret liaison with Shekhar. Another burning example of stereotypical representation can be analyzed in the following lines:

Fully aware of the marriage plans for Lalita, he had not spoken even one word of reassurance to her, neither had he given her an opportunity to speak her mind. Shekhar had marked Lalita as the perpetrator of all crimes and judged her harshly; at the same time, jealousy, rage, hurt and frustration were all but burning him to a cinder. This perhaps is the manner in which all men pass judgment, and this how they are consumed inwardly by flames. (76)

Gradually a kind of hatred had grown in his mind for Lalita, Shekhar could not bring himself to either look at or address this wife of another, a seventeen-years-old woman now. In the agony of being seared through and through, he chided her in the harshest of terms; as a matter of fact, he did not even hesitate to call her a fallen woman (83). Staring at Girin in bewilderment he suddenly spoke aloud, “Please forgive me, Girin Babu, but have you not married Lalita?”

Girin did not marry Lalita because she revealed her earlier act of exchanging garlands with Shekhar. Girin explained, “On his deathbed Gurucharan Babu had made me promise not to marry elsewhere. I too had given him my word. After his death, Lalita di explained to me—of course, nobody else knows all this—that she was already married and that her husband was alive. Perhaps someone else in my place might not have believed what she said,

but I did not disbelieve a word. Besides, a lady cannot marry more than once, can she— whatever is the matter?” (87).

Ultimately, through different upheavals Shekhar accepts to marry Lalita, she is still seems lingering in-between being or not being united with Shekhar. At last Lalita answered, “Yes Ma, that is why. Whether there is someone else like Girin Babu in this world, I do not know. When I explained the situation to him, he immediately accepted the fact that I was married to another. Whether my husband acknowledged me or not was up to my husband, but he definitely existed and that was enough for Girin Babu to change his mind about marrying me.” Ultimately Lalita is obliged to surrender before the agent of patriarchy. So Sarat Chandra’s project of providing freedom for women seems incomplete and ambivalent.

Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, in fact, brings us closer to the Bengali middle class of his time. He focuses on colonial disciplinarily, conservative social norms, and the romantic desire to escape from it. A common theme in his novels is sacrifice which sublimates desire and acts as a redemptive force. Women most often have to bear the burden of that sacrifice. But he speaks equally eloquently of the discontents of that sacrifice, which is the source of ambivalence in his heroes as well as his stories. He has beautifully women the story by amalguming different turns and twists, traditions and modernity, elements of facts and fiction, romance and lifelike characters. The conversion of Gurucharan from conservative Hinduism to Brahma makes the narrative slightly different. It’s a kind of revolt and transformation too. Sarat Chandra’s use of simple language inspires and captures the imaginations of readers. Nobody has plumbed the depth of the twentieth century Bengali middle class psyche quite like him. Through the ambivalence of his characters, he doesn’t forget to implant the seeds of modernity. In spite of all these positive attitudes, some of the loopholes dragged him in ambivalence. His position, affiliation and the then society scenario were not sufficient for him to represent the social evils in full screen.

In the novel he has depicted females merely in the role of mother, daughter and wife. Why not he presented them in other roles like, teacher, lawyer, and other respected roles? It seems that the miserable, pathetic and horrible condition of women satisfies patriarchy. Creativeness, potentialities and fundamental rights of females are under erasure. In the novel, female characters are attached only with love and marriage. Lalita is depicted as an object of love. Bhuvaneshwori is presented as a factory for child production, and other female characters are not given any significant roles. Sarat Chandra wanted to provide freedom for females but he happened to plunge into ambivalence since he represented females stereotypically. To ensure his position in patriarchal society, to get popularity and win the heart of readers, he pretends to be depicting female issues and advocating female independence.

III. Female Stereotype: A Way to Sustain Patriarchy

Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay's portrayal of female characters in *Parineeta* is stereotypical. He has depicted female characters in various hierarchical categories, somewhere as child producing machine, a factor causing poverty and somewhere merely as an object satisfying male needs. In *Parineeta*, Lalita is projected as overtly submissive character. Chattopadhyay's privileging of males over female shows the stereotypical version to view females merely as subservient. Most of the male characters in the novel treat female characters attributing them with stereotypical images like, submissive, emotional, weak and beautiful. This helps males to dominate females.

The appearance of Lalita as an obedient, beautiful and innocent girl to Shekhar focuses on the stereotype that it is essential for girls to be beautiful externally to attract boys. Basically, the depiction of female characters as the nurse to prepare males, a factory for child production and messenger for patriarchal communication system limits the concept of male character about women in the novel. In many instances, Lalita appears devoted and dedicated to Shekhar.

The novel set son the backdrop of twentieth century India and the advocate of patriarchy as the protagonist shows the status and role of women in a conservative, cast-based, class-based and poverty-stricken society. The research has unveiled that the images has three dimensions, first, the idealized picture of Lalita, as good, beautiful, and useful; second, the pathetic condition of Bhuvaneshwori as a child producing machine; and, third, Charu, Annakali as serviceman to males. Lalita works as a nurse and entertains Shekhar as an innocent girl. She is a female so her position is stereotyped to serve and her appearance to be pretty, fresh, and young to satisfy male members of the society. In the novel, female characters are not given significant roles. Sarat Chandra has not been able to avoid using the social stereotypes in depicting female characters in his novel *Parineeta*. He has made his

characters male and female internalize the socially constructed gender roles because he himself, as a member of patriarchal society, has internalized the social values that enjoys the privileged position of males. As the feminist critics, who argue in, would say, Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay has created typical female characters content with the roles given by the society and their male counterparts fascinated with their bodily beauty. His male characters, on the other hand, idealized their female partners and praise their ignorance and meek servility which will reinvigorate the male position in society.

Sarat Chandra has got an opportunity to model his male and female characters and the way he has done is to prevalent established truth of patriarchal social structure. He has created one more discourse of female independence to reinforce that very truth. In this way, the analysis of Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay's characters in his novel *Parineeta*, provides us with the conclusion that the novel is one more attempt to create a patriarchal truth which benefits from stereotyping the women.

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