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Expression of Repressed Desires in Satyajit Ray's *Devi: The Goddess*

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By

Om Bahadur Rai

Roll number 391

Regd. No. 6-1-7-449-98

Symbol No. 283447

Central Department of English

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TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Kirtipur, Kathmandu

Central Department of English

Letter of Recommendation

Mr Om Bahadur Rai has completed his thesis entitled "Expression of Repressed Desires in Satyajit Ray's *Devi: The Goddess*" under my supervision. He carried out his research work from January, 2015 to February, 2016. I hereby recommended his thesis be submitted for viva voce.

Diwakar Upadhyay

Lecturer

Central Department of English

Date: February, 2016

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Letter of Approval

The thesis entitled "Expression of Repressed Desires in Satyajit Ray's *Devi: the Goddess*" by Om Bahadur Rai submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, has been approved by the under signed members of the Research Committee.

Members of Research Committee

Internal Examiner: _____

_____ External Examiner:

Head of Department

Central Department of English

Date: _____

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Abstract

Satyajit Ray's *Devi: The Goddess* is often critiqued as a film about disillusionment, decadence and disintegration. It indeed deals with religious superstition, degradation of feudalism and the tragedy of a colonial era conservative Hindu family split between two world views about the existence of the almighty in the late nineteenth century Bengali society. But this thesis tries to explore and examine the underlying theme of expression of repressed desires in the film. Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud's theory of psychoanalysis is the tool to explore this theme, with an emphasis on how he interprets dream sequences to decode the desires that the human begins repress in their subconscious mind thanks to legal, social and moral restrictions. Ray has denied implying anything erotic, incestuous or taboo. Nevertheless, the symbols and images found in his cinematic craft suggest the Freudian undertone in Ray's classic. By interpreting the dream of Kalikinkar, one of the three major characters of the film, with the help of Freud's theory of psychoanalysis, this thesis reaches a conclusion that *Devi: The Goddess* is as much about expression of repressed desires as it is about mysticism, fanaticism, obsession, fate and feminism. The thesis also discusses the concept of Electra complex to apply the process of role reversal to understand how Kalikinkar sees Doyamoyee, who is actually his daughter-in-law, as his mother.

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I. Expression of Repressed Desires in *Devi: The Goddess*

Devi: The goddess is a 1960 Bengali film directed by Satyajit Ray. Set against the backdrop of the colonial era Bengali society of the late nineteenth century, the film is essentially the story of a Hindu family, which struggles to overcome a deep religious chasm, fails miserably in its efforts and crumbles like a sand castle in a tragic climax. Two conflicting views about religion, particularly existence of the god, form the crux of the plot, which is shaped by the superstitious belief of a conservative patriarch and the contradictory world-view of his rebellious son.

Widely regarded as one of India's finest filmmakers, Ray developed the screenplay of this film out of a short story penned by Provat Kumar Mukhopadhyay. Known as Bengal's Balzac, Mukhopadhyay published his short story in 1899, when India was colonized by the British. A decade after the fall of the British rule, Ray adapted Mukhopadhyay's story into a visually rich and compelling film. Nevertheless, he had no inkling that his film would create a political stir. The Hindus deemed it as an attack on their religion, especially the tradition of idolatry. They sought a ban on it. Fortunately, Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of India, stood by Ray's work, and the controversy over the film subsided. Later, the film won several national and international awards, including the best Indian feature film in 1961.

On the surface, *Devi: The Goddess* is an ordinary story about how a cultured family eventually disintegrates as a result of the conflict between the patriarch and his offspring. But it is also about a young woman deprived of marital bliss, her silent dilemma and tragedy in the wake of the conflict between her husband and father-in-law. Ray has woven an intriguing plot by exploring the repressed desires of the major characters in a subtle way in this classic Bengali-language film. The cinematic images and symbols employed by him make it even more appealing, and the repressed desires of the characters even more convincing.

Like any other films, *Devi: The Goddess* has some indispensable characters, and it is imperative to analyze their behavior, utterances as well as ulterior motives to fathom their repressed desires in a conservative Hindu society that is proud of its undiluted social mores and values. Kalikinkar Roy, the first of the three major characters, is a feudal landlord, and he is formidable not only to his family but also the village. An ardent devotee of *Kali*, he firmly believes that the Hindu goddess will one day respond to his life-long devotion by manifesting herself in some form. He truly believes that *Kali* does exist and tends to visit her devotees. His superstitious belief creates fissures in his otherwise harmonious family, provokes his son to speak out against him and culminates into a tragic end. Analyzing his social status, behavior, thoughts and actions are the key to decoding the hidden themes of the film.

Umaprasad, another major character in the film, is the youngest of Kalikinkar's two sons. He has a young, beautiful and innocent wife. Despite being born to and brought up in a conservative family shaped by his father's religious view, he breaks free from superstitious beliefs, values reasons and musters courage against what he believes is wrong. He leaves his wife lonely, goes to Kolkata for higher education, and is exposed to the world outside his village. His exposure to western education, values and lifestyle boost him for a face-off with his father. But he loses the battle against his father's blind faith, and helplessly watches his wife vanishing in a mist – a symbol of silence and dilemma that his wife endures.

Doyamoyee, the last of three major characters, is Umaprasad's wife and Kalikinkar's daughter-in-law. She is young, beautiful and yet sensual. She exudes child-like innocence from her face. Her eyes are remarkably expressive. But she apparently lacks conviction about religious views, and thereby confidence to challenge what is thrust upon her. She leaves no stone unturned to be a dutiful daughter-in-law at the cost of losing marital bliss and enduring pain. After her husband goes to Kolkata for study, she spends much of her time writing letters

to him, tending to her father-in-law and chatting with Khoka, her five-year-old nephew.

Besides these three major characters, there are some minor characters like Khoka. They are not so important to the plot, but their relations with the major characters are important to explore the major concepts of the film. Harasundari, Kalikinkar's elder daughter-in-law, is one of the important minor characters. Unlike Doyamoyee, she is a chatter-box, confronts her husband, Taraprasad, quite often and is not able to tolerate what she says is the madness of her father-in-law. But she is too not strong enough to challenge Kaliikinkar. Khoka, the only son of Taraprasad and Hara Sundari, is obviously oblivious of the tension that rattles his family. But he has to pay the ultimate price for his grandfather's madness.

Conflict is an integral part of any plot, and it adds intrigue to the story. In *Devi: The Goddess*, conflict looks subtle but has implications not only on the lives of major as well as minor characters. In the early scenes of the film, Kalikinkar is the head of a happy family. He is a wealthy landlord, and his family is free from worries about financial issues. It has been three years since the marriage between Umapasrad and Doyamoyee. They are deeply in love with each other, but they do not have a baby yet. Umapasrad respects his father. So does Doyamoyee. As Umapasrad studies in Kolkata and gets acquainted with western literature and philosophy, Doyamoyee tends to her father-in-law. She serves him with his *hookah* (a tobacco pipe) and massages his feet.

However, things start falling apart when Kalikinkar has a dream that Doyamoyee is not an ordinary woman but an incarnation of *Kali*, the Hindu goddess. This is the main turning point in the film, and it sets the stage for conflict to play out. The dream that Kalikinkar sees is uncanny. He first sees a weird image which has just two signs of eye and another sign of *bindi* – a mark that married women have on their foreheads in the Hindu society. The image gradually morphs into the image of Doyamoyee's mysterious face. For a while, Doyamoyee's vivacious eyes stare at Kalikinkar.

The following morning when he wakes up, Kalikinkar recalls his dream. He interprets the dream in his own way and reaches a conclusion that the goddess *Kali* acknowledged his life-long devotion by visiting him in the guise of his daughter-in-law. He thinks the dream was just a means for the goddess to reveal her true identity. He places Doyamoyee on an altar and worships her. So do the villagers. Most people trust Kalikinkar. But Harasundari is suspicious. She writes a letter to Umaprasad, informing him about the new situation involving his wife. Umaprasad returns and sees his wife garlanded and worshipped like a goddess. He is unable to rescue her as she is surrounded by her devotees. He cannot have physical intimacy with his 'goddess' wife. He is sure that his wife is not a goddess but just a victim of his father's imagination. He confronts his father, questioning the reason for his claim. To this, Kalikinkar refers to his dream. Umaprasad laughs it off, saying that Kalikinkar must have lost his mind to see his own daughter-in-law as 'mother'. For a while, Kalikinkar seems more or less convinced by Umaprasad's logic. He begins to think whether he has really gone mad. Meanwhile, an event unfolds which bolsters Kalikinkar's belief that Doyamoyee is really an incarnation of *Kali*. Just before Umaprasad starts confronting Kalikinkar, a villager brings his dying grandson and asks the 'goddess' Doyamoyee to save his life. While the father and son engage themselves in a debate, the sick child lies unconsciously in front of Doyamoyee. The child miraculously regains consciousness, cementing Kalikinkar's blind faith in Doyamoyee's divine power. After this, Kalikinkar becomes more resolute and Umaprasad gives up arguing with him. He instead begins meeting his wife clandestinely, trying to persuade her to flee the mansion along with him. However, she is reluctant because she has slowly trusting his father-in-law. She thinks something wrong could happen if she runs away. The wrangling and worshipping continue until a tragic incident takes place. When Khoka falls sick, Kalikinkar refuses to take him to hospital. Instead, he asks his 'goddess' daughter-in-law to cure him, like 'she did with the sick child' a few days ago. But Khoka dies,

leaving everyone shattered. Doyamoyee, mentally disturbed by Khoka's death, runs away aimlessly and vanishes into a mist – a scene which implies her insanity. It is a blow to Kalikinkar's belief. It is a loss that Umapasrad is forced to live with. And Khoka's parents are no less shattered.

This thesis tries to explore the theme of expression of repressed desires in *Devi: The Goddess*. And the theory of Sigmund Freud, the Austrian neurologist who is widely believed to be the father of psychoanalysis, is a tool to examine and establish this theme. This thesis also tries to tackle the Freudian concept of Oedipus complex. The film does not explicitly deal with the Freudian undertone, but implicitly offers a view into the desires that the human beings always tend to repress in a civilized society due to legal and social restrictions on immoral values.

Ray, regarded as the international face of the Indian cinema, was not aware of the magnitude of the controversy that the dealing with a sensitive topic like religion would possibly create. But he was aware of the religious sensitivity, and exercised some self-censorship. In an article published in *Seattle Times* in 1995, film critic John Hartl reveals how Ray had to restrain himself from using his creativity to the fullest. He writes:

Accused of attacking Hinduism, Ray was nearly prevented from releasing it abroad...Ray avoided another kind of controversy by shooting the romantic scenes in a self-censoring manner. Complaining that such scenes in Indian films have been 'reduced to a formula of clasping hands, longing looks and vapid, supposedly amorous verbal exchanges', he admitted that 'I used a shot of a couple kissing in `Devi'

but did not venture beyond a long shot with the lovers silhouetted behind a mosquito netting...What seemed like compromise then looks like artistry now. Ray's restraint in all matters is part of what makes 'Devi' so powerful and so disorienting. (par. 7)

The article written by Hartl makes it clear that Ray consciously tried not to give a Freudian angel to his film. Critics have explored the themes like fate, cultural decadence, colonialism and feminism in this film. For veteran American literary critic Norman Holland, *Devi: The Goddess* is about faith – and how faith itself is a creator and destroyer like *Kali*. In an essay published in the book *Literary India: Comparative Studies in Aesthetics, Colonialism and Culture* edited by Lalita Pandit, he writes,

Faith creates one reality and destroys another. We can no more live without faiths than we could survive without a mother—even if she be destroyer as well as creator. Our every act, our every perception, builds on hypotheses about the world, a basic trust in its constancy, in its materiality, in our ability to know it, in short, faiths. We could not see this film or any other without some such system of faiths about the world, although our belief in even so fine a film as this one is a belief in an illusion. Only by believing, though, can we find the truth—which turns out to rest once more on belief. This is, then, a film about faith, the terrifying duality of faith. No wonder she goes mad at the end. No wonder India or the U.S.—both lands dense with religion—lurch between a pious search for peace and maddened genocide. Satyajit Ray dramatizes in *Devi* a psychological truth we all must suffer. (Par.25)

Other critics like Monalisa Bhattacherge finds post-colonial theme in *Devi: The Goddess*. In her essay "The 19th Century Rural Bengali Women and the Films of Satyajit Ray: A study", she writes,

Umaprasad could not free his wife from unrealistic blind belief ... He even failed to convince his wife Dayamayee that she was a human being, not an incarnation of God. Umaprasad could not bring his wife Dayamayee to Calcutta in spite of his strong belief. His fragile arguments, progressive mind could not cross the limit of middle class families enlightened with Colonial structure. (20)

In his book *Teaching Religion and Film*, George J Watkins argues that the film is fundamentally about religion, superstition and feudalism and other related issues prevalent in the rural Bengali society during the colonial era. He writes that "The film takes a critical look at religious and feudal practices in early 20th century British Bengal and at the propensity of rich and poor alike to believe in and live by superstitions." (81) Nonetheless, his argument echoes Bhattacharje's when he says the film also touches upon the limitation of the colonial education. He adds,

Though Umaprasad learns modern ideas, he is totally ineffective against his father. Modernity in the colonial period might have provided ways to escape the extremely rigid, mundane existence available to most, but it did not pave paths for transcendence into a fully-satisfying self-hood. Umaprasad convinces Doyamoyee that she is human and should escape with her to Kolkata. On the way there she sees a discarded wooden structure by the riverbank, which a few months ago had carried the mud idol of goddess Durga, whom everyone had worshipped. Doyamoyee stops and exclaims to her husband, "What if I were a goddess!"(82)

Bishnupriya Ghosh, a professor at University of California, has authored a scholarly article on *Devi: The Goddess* from the perspective of third-world feminism. In her article titled "Satyajit Ray's *Devi*: Constructing a Third-World Feminist Critique", she writes that this is a feminist film that undertakes the construction of female identity, in order to conceptualize differences in western and third-world cinematic hermeneutics". (165)

Some critics have not tried to see *Devi: The Goddess* beyond the conflict between superstition and logic. Dennis Schwartz is one of those critics. He argues in his write-up in Ozu's World Movie Review that Ray debunks religious superstition, idol worship and unquestioning belief in miracles, as he tells a simple tale of falsely worshiping the Hindu goddess Kali as an icon. He adds: "Ray's lyrical images reflect on how the fervor of Hinduism can sometimes lead to misplaced worship. His reflections on Hinduism are similar to Bunuel's on Christianity." (par. 4)

A few critics have looked at the Freudian undertone in *Devi: The Goddess*, which helps form the foundation on which this thesis is based. American film writer Richard von Busack is one of them. He says the film is specifically about 'the stranglehold of Hindu orthodox in 19th century Bengal', but he also finds a Freudian angle to it. He writes: "We can insinuate what sexual longings might have motivated the old man." (par.2) Busack finds Kalikinkar's attitude 'dubious', implying that he has sexual desire for his daughter-in-law. He is not alone who doubts if Kalikinkar really saw his daughter-in-law in his dream. They suspect that he might have conjured up the image of his daughter-in-law out of his repressed sexual desire. Pauline Kael, an American film writer, is one of the critics who finds Kalikinkar's dream strange. She writes:

The story, about a wealthy man who convinces his son's bride that she is in incarnation of the goddess Kali, has startling Freudian undertones. Ray's feelings for the intoxicating beauty within the disintegrating way of life of 19th

century land-owning class makes this one of the rare, honest films about decadence. What we see is the girl's readiness to believe, her liquid acquiescence, not so much pride as a desire to please. And, surrounded by so much luxury, what is there for the girl to do but please? The whole indolent life is centered on pleasure. (par. 3)

The scene in which Doyamoyee massages Kalikinkar's legs while the latter talks about his fondness and relation with *Kali Maa* (the mother god) has drawn attention from a lot of critics. Andrew Robinson, the author of a biography about Ray, has described it as 'an erotic act'. Film critic Paulin Kael has also referred to this scene to prove Freudian undertones in the film. In her book "Cinema, Emergence, and the Films of Satyajit Ray", professor Keya Ganguly writes:

An intricate psychoanalytical apparatus is not needed to observe that, Ray's denials notwithstanding, the erotic content of the scene is not far too below its surface. In fact, the appearance and texture of Kalikinkar's fur-line chair literally, and obviously, installs the sense that we are in the presence of a fetish – which, as the classic Freudian scenario goes, requires displacement of a disavowed object (female genitalia) by the avowal of an acceptable, metonymic substitute – with animal fur being the most tangible and visible likeness. (118)

This thesis is all about undertone of *Devi: The Goddess*. Undertone can be defined as the implied meaning of a literary or cinematic work. In some literary and cinematic works, authors or filmmakers deliberately imply a hidden message. In some other cases, they do it unwittingly. In most cases, the reason why authors and filmmakers want to suggest something in an implied rather than an explicit way is fear of controversies. If they intend to say something which is against moral values of a particular society, creative persons often

choose the implied way to state what they want to state. It is difficult to say whether Ray deliberately wanted to imply a dark undertone in *Devi: The Goddess*. He might or might not have done it in a deliberate manner. But, there are visual images and symbols suggesting that it was indeed his intention to suggest a subtext in an otherwise simplistic drama.

The Freudian undertone is associated with eroticism, taboo, incestuous relationship and pleasure principles. Nevertheless, these aspects of human nature, behavior and relationship are rarely discussed in the Oriental literature. Therefore, it is very relevant to discuss the Freudian undertone implied by Ray. A Freudian analysis of *Devi: The Goddess* will add to the discourse on the subjects considered to be a taboo in the literary narrative of the Oriental world.

This subject is not only relevant and important but also very interesting because it deals with the theme of sexual fantasy that leads to the disintegration of a nineteenth century conservative family. The patriarch of the family is a formidable landlord, but he is also a lustful widower who secretly desires for physical intimacy with his own daughter-in-law. This is a very scandalous and outrageous idea in the Oriental society where sex outside marriage is forbidden and desire for physical intimacy with daughter or daughter-in-law is condemned outright. But when Freud's theory of psychoanalysis is applied in *Devi: The Goddess*, what have been described by critics mostly as the subject of cultural decadence, third-world feminism and failure of colonial teaching turns out to be the tale of a licentious affair masked under obsession, fanaticism and mysticism. This thesis analyzes the dream of one of the principle characters of the film to prove that Ray's fine cinematic work is much more than meets the eye.

In the field of psychoanalysis and literature, Oedipus complex essentially refers to a male child's secret desire for incestuous relations with his mother. At the same time, it is also about his unconscious rivalry with his father over the possession of his mother. The Oedipal

desire is always repressed, and found only in the unconscious mind and accompanied by guilt psychology. It often manifests itself in multiple ways, but always ends up being repressed by Ego or Super Ego. In Oedipus complex, the desire is often one-sided and does not necessarily need to be reciprocated by the mother. The Oedipal desire begins to ebb away usually when the child identifies the same-sex parent as his father, the rightful sexual partner of his mother and not his competitor. It is known in psychoanalysis as a process of resolution of Oedipus complex.

In *Devi: The Goddess*, Kalinkar is not a child. Nor is Doyamoyee his mother. He is an elderly widower and she is his daughter-in-law. In order to understand the Freudian undertone of this film, it is imperative to analyze at least three of its key characters. Without analyzing their behavior and relations with each other in the light of the Freudian theory, it would be impossible to decode the film's deep undertone.

In "Journal of Religion and Faith", David F. Burton writes:

Devi is about the clash of two worldviews in a Bengal village. On the one hand, there is the traditional Hindu perspective in which women are under the control of family patriarchs, goddesses can incarnate in young women, dreams convey knowledge, and miracles are expected. On the other hand, there is the rationalist, reformist point of view according to which women's status should be uplifted and beliefs in incarnations, religious visions, and the miraculous are dismissed as mere superstition. (13)

Although Ray tried to underplay the Freudian undertone in his film, *Devi: The Goddess* was viewed by the Hindus as an attack on their religion, especially the practice of idolatry. They sought a ban on the film, and also pressured the authorities to prohibit it from being screened at international film festivals. It was only when Jawaharlal Nehru, the independent India's first prime minister, came out in support of Ray that the simmering controversy over

the film ebbed away. Later, the film went on to win several national and international awards, including the Indian president's medal as a best feature film in 1961.

However, Provat Kumar Mukhopadhyay's short story titled just as *the goddess*, on which Ray's movie was based, had not caused a stir in 1899. It was largely because of the fact that he was a Brahmin, the highest caste in the Hindu hierarchy. He had borrowed the idea of his short story from Rabindranath Tagore, a Nobel laureate. Tagore developed the idea after seeing a girl being worshipped as an incarnation of the goddess within a Brahmin family. He did not dare write it, though. He foresaw religious and political controversy as he belonged to the Brahmo society, a section of Bengal's Hindus that publicly opposes practice of idol worshipping.

Ray also belonged to the Brahmo society but he probably underestimated the risk associated with dealing with a sensitive topic like religion. He thought that India was, by 1960, mature enough to embrace a film on a sensitive topic like religion. He was wrong. The outcry caused by *Devi: The Goddess* showed that he completely misread the political atmosphere of the 1960 India.

Devi: The Goddess is certainly not Ray's magnum opus. He is famous for many other cinematic works, including *the Apu Trilogy*. He has delivered classic films like *Pather Panchali*, *Aparajito*, *Apu Sansar*, *Jalsaghar*, *Charulata* and *Pratidwandi*. As in his other films, Ray has employed visual images and symbols to make his work more compelling and intriguing in *Devi: The Goddess*. His penchant for visual symbols and images – a key aspect of craft of filmmaking – can be found in every shot and frame of this film. He has always paid special attention to cinematography – a talent that his contemporary filmmakers lacked. His films are visually rich and capture human emotions, predicament and dilemma in a brilliant manner.

In this black and white film, he has used the magnificent mansion owned by Kalikinkar as the setting against which the compelling drama unfolds. As much of the drama unfolds against this very setting, there is not much scope for Ray to explore the beauty of the exterior, unlike in his other movies. However, he does not give an impression of being crippled by the limitation of the setting and uses multiple visual symbols and images to signify something that the movie does not explicitly focus on. In one of its articles on *Devi: The Goddess*, Strictly Film School, which publishes articles about landmark international movies, states:

From the opening sequence illustrating the adornment of the Kali statue, Ray presents a figurative analogy for the inevitable fate of the naïve and trusting Doya as she, too, is manipulated and transformed into the image of the reincarnated goddess... the repeated imagery of window bars, darkness and shadows and veils and curtains reflect the pervasive sense of confinement oppression and unenlightening within the household. (5)

Not only the opening scene of the movie but also the closing scene has the same image: a white statue of what resembles the popular image of the Hindu goddess Kali. In fact, the statue, idol and image of the goddess Kali is shown every now and then. And the most powerful of all these images is the one which Kalikinkar sees in his dream. He sees an image of eyes of the goddess Kali, which resemble like a female vagina if Freud's psychoanalysis is to be followed. The vaginal image slowly morphs into the image of the face of Doyamoyee. This in itself can be interpreted as a statement about kalikinkar's obsession with Doyamoyee.

Kalikinkar's mansion is in itself a character in *Devi: The Goddess*. It is a mute character but gives feel and mood in almost all scenes and sequences. The mansion has giant and splendid pillars resembling female thighs. Ray has presented these pillars in a way that they look like symbols of women's sexuality. In almost all frames, these pillars stand in a pair, giving impression as though some woman is standing still. Whether in scenes where

Kalikinkar worships Doyamoyee as a living goddess or in other scenes where the locals flock to Kalikinkar's mansion, a pair of white and splendid pillars is always shown.

Bindi is another symbol employed by Ray in the film. Doyamoyee always wears a *Bindi* on her forehead as a married woman. When Kalikinkar sees the dream, it is the *Bindi* that he first sees. The *Bindi* above a pair of mysterious eyes morphs with the *Bindi* of Doyamoyee. The vagina-shaped *Bindi* is a hint of sexual undertone that the film has carried all along.

Ray has brilliant played with color. He has used darkness to give mood of the film and characters. In a scene where Doyamoyee, after realizing that she might be crucified for the death of Khoka, seemingly loses her sanity and hysterically asks Umaprasad to help her put on a necklace, she is shown in darkness, which symbolically depicts the tragedy that befell them. At the end, she runs away into the blanket of mist, which is again a symbol of sorrow that has engulfed not only her but the whole family.

In short, Ray intends to communicate with his audience not only through explicit unfolding in the film but also through multiple symbols, imageries and motifs. And, when these symbols and images are analyzed, it would not be difficult to say that they point toward the subtext of the film, which is Kalikinkar's sexual obsession with Doyamoyee. These visual images add to interpretation of the dream sequence to explore the theme of Oedipus complex.

Ray officially denied implying Freudian perspective. But he once told Andrew Robinson, an American actor who has written a book about Ray, that there could be some elements of incestuous feelings. In his book *Satyajit Ray: An Inner View*, he quotes the Bengali director as saying "I had not a shred of that element (Oedipus complex) in mind. The closest *Devi* comes to sounding out incestuous feelings is when the returning son confronts his religion-drunk father: "I don't know what was in this for you." (scene 51:10-51:35)

But there are hints, at times somewhat clear, that Ray intends to deal with the concept of Oedipus complex. Through fissures created by differences in viewing presence of the god,

Ray subtly implies that the all-powerful patriarch nurses a deep-seated and long-suppressed desire to have sexual relationship with his own daughter-in-law. There are scenes, dialogues and the clever use of visual images and symbols to denote that the film's undertone is something else.

A two-minute-long scene is very important in analyzing *Devi: The Goddess* through the Freudian lens. This scene opens with Kalikinkar sitting relaxed on a fur-lined chair and Doyamoyee massaging his feet. Kalikinkar talks to Doyamoyee – about how good she felt when she came to his house, about his devotion to the mother god and her relationship with her husband. Doyamoyee just listens, blushes sometimes but never utters a word. She slinks away when she feels embarrassed. This scene is a sort of soliloquy. Kalikinkar goes on talking:

Five years back, I wasn't able to walk without a stick. If it weren't for her (the goddess), I wouldn't have started walking again. Do you know what I did to walk again, dear? I couldn't find peace of mind. So I thought I'd visit the Tarapore pilgrimage. But that didn't happen....And when you came here, this was brightened up. In this old age, I've got a mother like you. She (the goddess) is also a mother. She can turn the impossible into the possible. What do you say? Do you know what I'm afraid of? I'm afraid about your husband. It is not easy to handle a fast-paced man like him. You're the only one who can control him. He listens to whatever you say. Doesn't he? Does he write to you regularly? Does he do that every day?" (*scene 18:20-20:26*).

American literary critic Norman Holland does not just assert that this film is about faith but also about rivalry and repressed emotions. He says that 'all the men in the film are trying to possess a mother-figure'. (par 8). He explains:

Khoka wants Doya as a mother (and links her to a story about a witch who eats the bones of little children). His grandfather uses Doya as a “little mother.” Uma’s elder brother comes to worship her as a goddess. Her husband, of course, wants her as a wife, the submissive, child-like traditional Indian bride. Uma’s friend wants to marry a widow. The beggar loses the goddess, then gets her. The old holy men worship her. (Par 8)

So *Devi: The Goddess* is not just about generation gap, contradictory views about the god, conflict between eastern and western philosophy. It is much more deeper than it looks like. This thesis tries to unearth the hidden theme of the film to contribute to the discourse on the influence of the Freudian in human imagination, literature and cinema. Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* will be the most important reference book to analyze Kalinkinkar's dream. Is it real? Did he really see it? Or is he just manipulating others to fulfill his sexual desire by separating Doyamoyee from his husband and placing her right in front of his eyes all the while? Does his worship amount to an act of voyeurism? This this will examine these critical questions in the next chapters.

II. Interpretations of Dreams in *Devi: The Goddess*

In Satyajit Ray's *Devi: The Goddess*, the dream is an integral part of the story. The entire film revolves around a dream that Kalikinkar Roy, one of the three major characters, has while asleep. After this dream sequence, nothing remains the same in his family. His daughter-in-law is no longer perceived to be a mortal. She is treated as an avatar of the Hindu goddess Kali. She is not allowed to have physical intimacy with her husband. Doyamoyee, the so-called goddess, is worshipped every day while her husband, Umprasad, burns with anger. Umprasad never dared for a face-off with his father. But now, he challenges his father's word-view, questions his superstitious belief and even calls him mad.

In Kalikinkar's dream, an image of an eye-shaped *bindi* (a mark that married women put on their foreheads in the Hindu society) just above a pair of eyes emerges out of the darkness. The image gradually gets closer, and its eyes are replaced by those of Doyamoyee. The *bindi* remains for a few more seconds, only to be replaced by a thick dot on Doyamoyee's forehead. Her face zooms out, and she stares without a blink even once. Her face slightly lowered, but her eyes looking up and straight. Her expression is mysterious, sensual and terrifying as well. Kalikinkar sweats and suffocates on the bed as he sees the mysterious image morphing into the face of his own daughter-in-law.

Kalikinkar interprets the dream in his own way. He now believes that the goddess *Kali*, whom he has worshipped all his life, is actually around him all the while in the guise of a mortal being that Doyamoyee is. But literary critics say there is more to it. They are suspicious of his interpretation of dream, and have tried to look at from various perspectives, most importantly through the eyes of Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis.

Dream has always been a subject of fascination in the field of art, literature and philosophy. It has intrigued the humankind ever since the era of the great Greek thinkers. In the ancient time, the humankind considered dream as an instruction by the god. They thought there were two types of dream. First, the kind through which the god would show them the right path to success, peace, harmony, prosperity, dignity and greater life. Second, the kind through which the god would misguide them to failure, conflict, disharmony, penury, insult and miserable life. The latter type of dream, they believed, was a consequence of their own misdeed, sin and crimes. It was a divine way to punish them for their actions that would lead to degradation of humanity, moral values and ethics.

In his book *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud further sheds light on how the ancients saw and dealt with dreams. He writes,

This pre-scientific conception of the dream among the ancients was certainly in perfect keeping with their general view of life, which was wont to project as reality in the outer world that which possessed reality only within the mind. It, moreover, accounted for the main impression made upon the waking life by the memory left from the dream in the morning, for in this memory the dream, as compared with the rest of the psychic content, seems something strange, coming, as it were, from another world. (2)

A review of literature suggests that psychologists, psychoanalysts and philosophers agree that dream is reflection of something experienced in the waking state, has secret and

implicit meanings and also functions as a process of fulfillment of desires, some of which suppressed, in a sub-conscious state of mind. Departing from and building up on earlier thinkers, Freud made some profound statements about dream. For example, he says that not all dreams are explicit and easy to interpret. Some dreams are complex, their secret meanings shrouded with layers of mystery. He suggests that cracking secret meaning of one's dream is a key to diagnosing his/her mental problems.

In *Devi: The Goddess*, the dream is the soul of the conflict. On the morning after he wakes up from his dream, Kalikinkar walks toward Doyamoyee's room, repeatedly calling her 'Maa' (mother) as if in a daze. Doyamoyee opens the door. She is astonished by the marked change in her father-in-law's behavior. Being a demure Bengali daughter-in-law, she cannot speak anything for or against her father-in-law. She stands still just outside her room, looking baffled as her father-in-law prostrates before her. Hearing his father crying 'Maa' repeatedly, Kalikinkar's eldest son, Taraprasad, reaches there. Kalikinkar also asks him to prostrate before Doyamoyee, reiterating that she is not a human being but an incarnation of the goddess. Umapasrad, Kalikinkar's youngest son and Doyamoyee's husband, confronts his father, saying that the old man has lost his mind. For him, interpreting Kalikinkar's dream as Doyamoyee's manifestation of being a living goddess is nothing but a sign of madness. For him, his father needs to check his mental state rather than being followed by others. Herein lies the problem of *Devi: The Goddess*. Based on the Freudian theory as explained in *Interpretation of Dream*, it can be claimed that Kalikinkar's dream has a secret meaning. He is misguided in interpreting his dream. That he says his dream was about Doyamoyee's manifestation of being an incarnation of the goddess *Kali* was nothing but a case of error. He might not have deliberately misinterpreted his dream. He might have tried in the honest way possible to reach a logical conclusion. Nevertheless, there are several other important factors

which hint at possibility that the meaning of his dream was something hidden, something that originated in his sub-conscious state of mind.

The first reason why it can be claimed that Kalikinkar's dream has a secret meaning is the timing of his dreaming. For three years after their marriage, Umabasad and Doyamoyee live together. They are never separated from each other. After three years, Umabasad leaves for Kolkata for higher study, leaving his wife alone. Doyamoyee sleeps alone in her room. This is when the dream in question comes to Kalikinkar. It raises some important questions: why did Kalikinkar not see the dream earlier when Umabasad and Doyamoyee were living together? Why did he see the dream soon after Umabasad's departure to Kolkata? Did Umabasad's absence give way for the sexual desire suppressed in Kalikinkar's sub-conscious mind for years to come out? Was he obsessed with Doyamoyee? Did he fantasize about his own daughter-in-law?

Another reason is the way Kalikinkar behaves with Doyamoyee. He almost stares at his daughter-in-law, often pretending to be engaging in casual conversations. He asks Doyamoyee about her husband, her feeling and her loneliness. As always, Doyamoyee remains silent, hardly replying to her father-in-law. Kalikinkar's behavior raises suspicion over whether he has some ill-intentions.

In the day preceding the night when Kalikinkar sees the dream, he has his feet massaged by Doyamoyee. As Doyamoyee silently caresses Kalikinkar's feet, he keeps talking about how he was unable to walk without stick until five years ago, how the mother (the goddess Kali) helped him regain his strength, how he planned to visit the Tarapore pilgrimage but failed to do so and how his house was brightened up after Doyamoyee came here as a new bride.

The reason why Kalikinkar sees the dream in the night right after having this conversation with a lonely Doyamoyee also helps explain why his dream could have a secret

meaning. In this conversation, he calls Doyamoyee as her mother (like a caring motherly figure) and he did not go to the pilgrimage after she came into the house. This conversation allows the audience a peek into the mental state of Kalikinkar. Here, he is opening up a little bit, showing signs that he has some obsession and fantasy about mother and daughter-in-law.

Another reason is the fact that Kalikinkar is a widower. He has lost his wife. He is lonely. It is pretty evident that men without wife – no matter how old they are – tend to have greater libido than men living in the company of their wives. There is another striking point here. Kalikinkar does not enjoy going near his eldest daughter-in-law. He has another daughter-in-law, but he does not like going near her because she is not as young and attractive as Doyamoyee and lives with her husband. On the other hand, his eldest daughter-in-law seems to have some kind of inexplicable disgust for Kalikinkar. She is visibly angry when Kalikinkar prostrates before Doyamoyee and worships her as a living goddess. These details hint at Kalikinkar's obsession with Doyamoyee.

Not only does Kalikinkar call Doyamoyee as '*Maa*' and worship her but also separates her from Umapasrad. He draws a moral line between the mortal being that is Umapasrad and the divine being that is Doyamoyee. Umapasrad cannot have physical and sexual relationship with Doyamoyee after she is pronounced to be a living goddess. Instead, she is placed on an alter and Kalikinkar sits right in front of her most of the time. It can be explained as a way for Kalikinkar to satiate his suppressed desire and nurses a deep sense of hatred for his son.

The aforementioned logics are proof that *Devi: The Goddess* is also as much about expression of repressed desires as it is about fate, feudal decadence, feminism and failure of colonial education. Some literacy critics have also pointed out the traces of Oedipus complex in the film. Psychology expert Kendra Cherry describes this Freudian concept as a boy's erotic attention to his mother. In her essay "What Is An Oedipus Complex? A Closer Look At One Of Freud's Most Controversial Ideas", she explains,

"A boy feels like he is in competition with his father for possession of his mother. He views his father as a rival for her attention and affections. In order to resolve the conflict, the boy then identifies with his father. It is at this point that the super-ego is formed. The super-ego becomes a sort of inner moral authority." (Par. 1)

When this Freudian theory is looked into, Kalikinkar now sees Umapasrad not as his young son but husband of Doyamoyee, whom he has fantasized unconsciously. So, he nurses a sense of hatred against Doyamoyee's husband. Thus, a line of separation between Umapasrad and Doyamoyee. This point turns out to be even more important and relevant in the course of decoding the secret meaning of Kalikinkar's dream.

For Freud, the dream is "the first link in a chain of abnormal psychic structures whose other links, the hysterical phobia, the obsession, and the delusion must, for practical reasons, claim the interest of the physician" (V). In the introductory remarks of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud further elucidates about this idea,

The dream (as will appear) can lay no claim to a corresponding practical significance; its theoretical value as a paradigm is, however, all the greater, and one who cannot explain the origin of the dream pictures will strive in vain to understand the phobias, obsessive and delusional ideas, and likewise their therapeutic importance. (V)

In his book, Freud has endeavored to prove that dream has hidden or explicit meanings; and their meanings can be interpreted by meticulously applying correct methods. His theory helps explore and understand the secret meanings of Kalikinkar's dream in Devi: *The Goddess*. Freud touches upon two popular methods of interpreting dream that have been there in the academia. The first of these two methods is known as the symbolic method. It tends to regard the dream content as a whole and tries to replace it by another content, which is

intelligible and analogous in certain respects. The dream of Pharaoh in the biblical story is an example of procedure of the symbolic dream interpretation method. In his dream, Pharaoh first sees a herd of seven fat cows followed by another herd of seven lean cows. The herd of lean cows devours the herd of fat cows. And, it has been interpreted as a symbolic substitute for a prediction of seven years of famine in ancient Egypt, which will lead to consuming of all the excess created by the previous seven years of good harvest. (81)

The second of these two popular methods of dream interpretation is anti-thesis of the idea of the first kind. It entirely abandons the claims that the dream content is a whole and can be replaced by another intelligent content. Freud designated it as 'the cipher method' of dream interpretation because it treats the dream as a kind of secret code in which every sign is translated into another sign of known meaning, according to an established key. For an instance, if a man loses shoes in his dream, it can be interpreted as an ominous sign that he might lose his wife in the near future. Such interpretations rely on dream books or well-established assumptions in some particular culture to derive sensible meanings. (82)

Departing from both these conventional methods of dream interpretation, Freud insists that "the dream actually has significance, and that a scientific procedure in dream interpretation is possible." (83)

Before he wrote *The Interpretation of Dreams* in the early nineteenth century, Freud spent several years in his attempts to find the solution of certain psychopathological structures in hysterical phobias, compulsive ideas, and the likes, for therapeutic purposes. In the process, he realized that solution and treatment could go hand in hand in those structures, which are regarded as morbid symptoms. In the course of those psychoanalytical studies, Freud started thinking about dream interpretation. He obliged his patients to inform him of all the ideas and thoughts that they came across under the given theme. It taught him that a dream may be linked into the psychic concatenation which must be followed backwards into

the memory from the pathological idea as a starting-point. The next step was to treat the dream as a symptom, and to apply to it the method of interpretation which had been worked out for such symptoms. (84)

One of the most important – and disputed as well – aspects of Freud's interpretation of dream is his concept of Oedipus complex. In this book, Freud for the first time coined this term to shed light on secret meanings of dream, particularly the suppressed and secret desire of a man to have sexual relationship with his own mother and the hatred against his own father.

Freud derived the key idea of Oedipus complex from the mythical story of Oedipus Rex – a fifth century BC Greek king who murdered his father and married his own mother. Oedipus went on to become a legendary mythical character when Sophocles, a Greek playwright, wrote a play about his life, destiny and tragedy circa 430 BC. Sophocles' play, arguably one of the best works of the human imagination, turned out to be a phenomenon. It was performed numerous times not only in the ancient Greece but also in the renaissance Europe. Freud watched it in Vienna in the 1880s. He was astonished by the theme of the play, and he went on to develop the concept of Oedipus complex. He first used this term in his 1899 book *Interpretation of Dreams*. However, some critics argue that he misread the central theme of Sophocles' masterpiece. Psychotherapist Jefferey B. Rubin agrees with Freud that some children want to be closer with their opposite sex parent but see the same-sex parent as a threat. However, he criticizes Freud for distorting the central concept of the play. He explains,

"I don't doubt that there are some children who wish to be more closely aligned with their opposite sex parent and feel antagonistic toward the one who is viewed as a threat— or misattuned—to them. But Freud misread *Oedipus Rex*—which does not illustrate the Oedipus complex— and distorted

its meaning to suit his theoretical preconceptions. A new world opens up, however, when we focus on the psychological implications of Sophocles' haunting story, rather than on Freud's theory—or his errors (par. 2)

Freud's idea of Oedipus complex is indeed not free from controversy. Not only Rubin, but many other scholars, academicians and psychology experts have criticized him for toying with a childish concept. Psychologist and cognitive scientist Steven Pinker is one of them. Building on the idea developed by anthropologist Edward Westermarck, he ridicules Freud as a silly intellectual. Westermarck, one of the world's foremost authority on incest and taboo, lived in the same era as Freud. But his view about incestuous relations were in sharp contrast with Freud's, and is known as the Westermarck effect. In his book *The History of Human Marriage*, he claims that people who live in close domestic proximity during the first few years of their lives become desensitized to sexual attraction and will not develop incestuous relationship. Pinker is heavily influenced by Westermarck. In his book *How the mind works*, he argues,

The idea that boys want to sleep with their mothers strikes most men as the silliest thing they have ever heard. Obviously, it did not seem so to Freud, who wrote that as a boy he once had an erotic reaction to watching his mother dressing. But Freud had a wet-nurse, and may not have experienced the early intimacy that would have tipped off his perceptual system that Mrs. Freud was his mother. The Westermarck theory has out-Freuded Freud. (41)

Freud's concept of Oedipus complex outraged academics, scholars and philosophers across the globe. While some rejected the idea and accused Freud of losing sanity, some built up further theories based on this concept. One of psychoanalysts who extended the concept of Oedipus complex is Carl Gustav Jung. He coined the term Electra complex, but that was basically the Freudian concept. According to Freud, a young girl is initially attached to her

mother during female psychosexual development. When the girl finds out that she does not have a penis and she is like her mother physically, she gets closer to her father and starts resenting her mother. She blames her mother for 'castration'. As a result, according to Freud, the girl then begins to identify with and emulate her mother out of fear of losing her love. According to psychology expert Kendra Cherry, Freud rejected the term 'Electra complex' and preferred to describe it as 'feminine Oedipus attitude, but Jung's foundation was based on Freud's.

Touching upon Electra complex is important because it helps understand other dimensions of the Freudian theory. His thesis about incestuous desires are not just about a young boy and his mother. It could be in multiple forms. In *Devi: The Goddess*, Kalikinkar is not a child and Doyamoyee is not his mother. He is an old widower and Doyamoyee is daughter in law. In the context of Electra complex, Kalikinkar can be viewed as a child and Doyamoyee as his mother. The fact that he calls the goddess Kali as '*Maa*' (mother) every now and then, and he has been longing to reach her all his life helps understand the role reversal in the film. In this same context, Umaprasad is mirrored as Kalikinkar's father, not his son. And Kalikinkar hates the image of his father that Umaprasad is. He tries to keep him away from his mother. And the conflict of the film interestingly turns into a battle over control over the make-believe mother, who is actually Kalikinkar's daughter-in-law and Umaprasad's wife.

Indian art critic Geeta Kapur senses the reversal of the role in *Devi: The Goddess*. Her argument adds to the claim that this film is indeed toying the idea about incestuous desires by reversing the traditional roles of father, mother and son. Jung's theory that Oedipus complex is not just about a male child's unconscious desire is proved by Kapur's argument and is applied in this film.

For the concept of Oedipus complex, Freud has relied on a Greek myth about Oedipus's tragedy and the Greek playwright Sophocles's drama on the same topic. To understand the Freudian concept of Oedipus complex, it is important to know the legend and tragedy of Oedipus. Summary of his story goes like this:

Oedipus is the son of Thebe's king Laius and queen Iocasta. Laius hears an oracle that his son, who is yet to be born now, will murder him and marry his own mother. So, Oedipus, upon his birth, is sent away by Laius to avoid the fulfillment of the devastating prophecy. He grows up at a foreign court, completely unmindful of his origin and the prophecy. He believes that the place where he grew up is the place of his birth as well. When he is a grown up man, he hears the same prophecy and learns that he is destined to become the murderer of his father and the husband of his mother. So, he goes away, believing that he fled from his native place.

On the way, he meets Laius, quarrels with him and, not knowing that he is his father, kills him. He then reaches the gates of Thebes, where he solves the riddle of the Sphinx. Thus, he is accepted by the people of Thebes as their new king. In gratitude, he is offered with the hand of Iocasta. He marries Iocasta, his own mother, and has three children. He lives a blissful life with Iocasta until a plague spreads across Thebes. Plague turns so deadly that hundreds of Thebian folks lose their lives. Oedipus sends a messenger to meet the prophet and to know the ways out of this deadly epidemic. The messenger brings the advice that the plague will stop as soon as the murderer of Laius is driven out of the country. But where is he hiding? Where is he to be found? The messenger knows the answer. But he refuses to tell Oedipus. Angered by the messenger's non-cooperation, Oedipus charges him with betrayal against the state. Left with no choice but to face Oedipus's wrath, the messenger reveals the truth: Oedipus is the man who killed Thebe's king and he is in fact Iocasta's own son. A devastated Oedipus now blinds himself.

Over the centuries, critics have believed that tragic effect of Oedipus's story, dubbed as the tragedy of fate, is found in the opposition between the powerful will of the gods and the vain resistance of the human beings who are threatened with destruction. They believe that resignation to the will of God and confession of one's own helplessness is the lesson which the deeply-moved spectators are to learn from the tragedy. Consequently, modern authors have tried to obtain a similar tragic effect by embodying the same opposition in a story of their own inventions. But spectators have sat unmoved while a curse or an oracular sentence has been fulfilled on blameless human beings in spite of all their struggle; later tragedies of fate have all remained without effect. Freud writes,

If the Oedipus Tyrannus is capable of moving modern men no less than it moved the contemporary Greeks, the explanation of this fact cannot lie merely in the assumption that the effect of the Greek tragedy is based upon the opposition between fate and human will, but is to be sought in the peculiar nature of the material by which the opposition is shown. There must be a voice within us which is prepared to recognize the compelling power of fate in Oedipus....And there must be a factor corresponding to this inner voice in the story of King Oedipus. (223)

On the whole, Freud concludes that dream, apart from being reflections of events that occur in the waking state, provides an outlet for the feeling and emotion long-suppressed in the sub-conscious state of mind. Dreams are deceptive for the general people. But, a meticulous study of a particular dream can reveal some secret and startling sides of psychic activities in the sub-conscious mind of the dreamer.

Wish fulfillment is an intrinsic aspect of psychoanalysis. Freud coined this term in the preliminary text of *The Interpretation of Dream* in 1899. According to Freud, wish fulfillment takes place when unconscious desires are repressed by the ego and the super-ego.

This repression often stems from guilt and taboos imposed by the society. Dreams are attempts by the unconscious to resolve some repressed conflict. (123) Simply put, the mind of a human being contains an element called super-ego, which is always cautious about legal, social and moral values and restrictions. And it functions like a superior system and does not allow the being to do everything that we want to do. It lets the being do the things that are allowed in the society. For example, a man might see an attractive girl walking down the lane. He might want to have sexual relationship with her instantly. But the super-ego tells him to refrain from fulfilling his sexual desire, saying that he cannot cross the limit and must abide by the mores and the values of the society he lives in. But the id, another element in the system of the mind, wants to fulfill the wish repressed by the super-id. While asleep, the super-id gets relaxed and the id comes into force. Then the man might dream in which he could have sex with the girl he fantasized about in the waking state.

At times, one might find someone in his or her own family sexually attractive. But this is taboo, and hence highly immoral. A man can share his desire for a girl outside his family with his friends. He can even speak out in the public or write about it. That is not considered immoral. He just needs to be cautious about not crossing the limits. But if he desires for his own mother, sister, niece, in-law or other female relatives, he cannot share his feelings with anyone. It is a sin he is not supposed to commit. It applies in the case of women, too. They cannot express their sexual desire for their father, brother or any male relatives. So the super-ego, influenced by the social mores and values, tends to suppress these immoral thoughts with even greater power. In *Devi: The Goddess*, the super-id of Kalikinkar is at its best and the old man sees the dream.

Freud has also developed the concepts of id, Ego and Super Ego as the three distinct aspects of the human psyche. These are not parts of the brain. Nor are they physical in any way. These are just systems of the brain, which develop in different phases and have different

characteristics. While the id seeks immediate pleasure – sexual, physical and mental, the Ego functions reasonably and controls the chaotic id. The super ego is a more superior form of the ego. It is conscious of social values, morals and customs, and restrains the human being from exuding their animalistic instincts. Psychologist Saul McLeod considers the Id as the most primitive and instinctive component of personality. He is of the view that a human being acts like a human being just because the Ego and the Super Ego often succeed in repressing the most chaotic part of the human psyche: the id. He explains:

The id consists of all the inherited components of personality, including the sex (life) instinct – **Eros** (which contains the libido), and the aggressive (death) instinct - **Thanatos**. The id is the impulsive (and unconscious) part of our psyche which responds directly and immediately to the instincts. The personality of the newborn child is all id and only later does it develop an ego and super-ego. (par. 2)

Freud claims the Super Ego is also a human conscience and it feeds guilt psychology, which sets off restraints over the chaos created by the id. In his book *The Ego and the Id*, he writes:

The super-ego retains the character of the father, while the more powerful Oedipus complex was and the more rapidly it succumbed to repression (under the influence of authority, religious teaching, schooling and reading), the stricter will be the domination of the super-ego over the ego later on—in the form of conscience or perhaps of an unconscious sense of guilt. By applying Freud's theories of Oedipus complex, interpretation of dream as well as id, Ego and Super Ego, it can be concluded that Kalikinkar's desire is suppressed by the Super Ego. He is the most respected member of his family and the society, so his id fails to erupt by defeating the power of Super Ego.

Therefore, his unconscious mind begins to fulfill his suppressed desire by interpreting his dream in his own way. (77)

Although *Devi: The Goddess* has been viewed more as a tale of religious mysticism and modernist versus traditionalist cultural conflict, it is at the same time a visual story of psychological obsession, fanaticism and feminine mystery, too. In his essay, "On Satyajit Ray's film adaptation of the goddess", Dilip K Basu, a film scholar who worked closely with the most iconic director of Indian cinema, suggests that the interpretation of *Devi: The Goddess* merely as a tale of religious mysticism and cultural conflict would be incomplete. He suggests more dimensions to the critical analysis of the film. Basu, who comes from the same Bengali society, sees influences of Greek writers like Euripedes, Sophocles and Aristophane in the story of *Devi: The Goddess*. Also, he states that the word 'Devi' in itself sounds western like Zeus (Greek) and Deus (Latin) – a clear reference to how Ray was influenced by Greek tragedies like 'Oedipus Rex', the genesis of the Freudian concept of Oedipus complex.

In his book *The Cinema of Satyajit Ray: Between Tradition and Modernity*, Darius Cooper asserts that Kalikinkar Roy, the powerful patriarch of a large Bengali family in *Devi: The Goddess*, is in a state of fanaticism (164). Kalikinkar's explanation for Doyamoyee, his daughter-in-law, being an incarnation of the goddess rather than a normal human being is backed by a dream. In the dream, Kalikinkar sees Doyamoyee's image slowly morphing into that of Kali, the most feared Hindu goddess, and starts worshipping her, keeping his son, Umapasrad, away from marital bliss. But, Cooper does not believe in Kalikinkar's dream. He writes that Kalikinkar 'allegedly' saw that dream (165). The word 'allegedly' means a lot here. It means that Cooper is not convinced that Kalikinkar actually saw a dream. In fact, Cooper suggests that Kalikinkar pretended to have seen such an outrageous dream, which Cooper believes is a ploy aimed at creating a rift between Umapasrad and Doyamoyee. And the

purpose behind creating of such a rift is crystal clear: fulfillment of sexual desire that Kalikinkar subconsciously developed after seeing the ravishing Doyamoyee.

Andrew Robinson, who wrote the autobiography of the ace Indian filmmaker, suspects the prevalence of the theme of Oedipus complex in *Devi: The Goddess*. The basis on which Robinson makes such an argument is the fact that Kalikinkar addresses Doyamoyee as 'Maa' (mother) and takes sensual pleasure during massage. In his book titled *Satyajit Ray: An Inner Eye*, Robinson writes: "With her father-in-law, her devotion is palpable; not only in the way she ministers to his comfort by bringing him medicine and sherbat and message his feet, but by her careful readying of the family shrine for his worship of the goddess." (124)

Freud divides the psychosexual development process of a human being in five phases. These phases are known as oral, anal, phallic, latent and genital. Psychologist Christopher L. Heffner adds that these stages unfold in a predetermined sequence. In his essay "Stages of Psychosexual Development", he writes that an unsuccessful completion in every stage means that a child becomes fixated on that particular erogenous zone and over – or under- indulges once he or she becomes an adult. About the phallic stage, he write:

The pleasure zone switches to the genitals. Freud believed that during this stage boy develop unconscious sexual desires for their mother. Because of this, he becomes rivals with his father and sees him as competition for the mother's affection. During this time, boys also develop a fear that their father will punish them for these feelings, such as by castrating them. This group of feelings is known as Oedipus Complex. (par. 4)

Unlike novels or short stories, a film is a rich medium of story-telling. In cinema, the director does not need to depend on just words, dialogues and description to tell a story. He can use visual images and symbols to imply what he cannot show through actions or dialogues. Ray knew the art and craft of cinema very well, and he proved in *Devi: The*

Goddess that a fine work of cinematography adds an aura to an otherwise dull story. Except for the dream sequence, the film does not have many twists, turns and actions. However, Ray's sense of cinematography has made this film a classic.

Ray cuts the opening shot dramatically from the animal sacrifice at a Hindu religious festival, where the older generation including Kalinkinkdar and his eldest son worship Kali while the younger generation including Umaprasad, Doyamoyee and Khoka enjoy the fireworks. This very sets the tone of the film, if it is to be looked at as a film about generation gap or the conflicting world-view between the father and the son.

Ray shows more contrasts in the later part of the film, particularly after Umaprasad leaves for Kolkata where he and his young friends wear socks and garters and English shoes. They ride carriages and smoke cigarettes, which is in contrast with the hookah Umaprasad's father smokes back in the village . They lapse occasionally into English, which is again in contrast with chaste Bangla language which Kalinkinkar speaks.

There is a pet parrot in Kalinkinkar's mansion. Doyamoyee adores the parrot, which is a symbol of her being – restricted and able to speak only what she hears around. Throughout the film, the director shows us feet. Doyamoyee washes and

messages her father-in-law's feet. After the dream sequence, when he decides she is divine, he bows down to her feet. She, however, curls them back, lightly resisting the role he is forcing on her. When Umaprasad returns and stares at his wife being worshipped, feet appear in the upper right of the frame. It is possible that Ray wanted to show us feet because it is our link with the earthly reality. Water is another symbol in the film. *Kali*, the Hindu goddess, protects us against drought. So Ray shows the images of *Kalls* being thrown in the water after the opening shots of the festival. Doya gives water and candy to Khoka, places fruit and water in the household shrine, administers medicine and water to the father. The beggar's sick child has not swallowed water in eight days. He is cured by having the milk (of Kali) poured between his lips. The husband wants to escape over the water, but Doya pulls back at the water's edge. Water is liquid, which is a symbol of sexuality. It always flows, like our feelings do.

Ray is the master of filmmaking. Right from the opening scene of the film to the last shot, he has created a poetry on the screen with his vision and with the technical skills of cinematographer Subrata Mitra. Whether it is *bindi* or pet parrot, whether it is the mansion or the ubiquitous water, whether it the feet or the eyes,

everything looks like symbols beautifully used by the ace Indian director to hint at expression of repressed desires of Kalinkar, Doyamoyee and Umprasad.

III Satyajit Ray's Psycho-Social Concern in *Devi: The Goddess*

Satyajit Ray's *Devi: The Goddess* was initially despised by the Hindu fundamentalists as an anti-religious film. They mounted pressure on the Jawaharlal Nehru administration of India in 1960 to bar the film from being released elsewhere. They believed that a film like *Devi: The Goddess* would tarnish the image of the Hindustan at a time when scars of partition were still fresh in the national psyche of the Indians. However, Nehru did not give into the pressure, and Ray's cinematic work emerged as a classic over the decades. It was viewed from multiple perspectives by the critics of art, literature and cinema. To some, it was a film about decadence of the values associated with feudalism and the failure of colonial education. To others, it was a film about generation gap and the disintegration of a family. Many also saw it through the prism of feminism, mysticism and obsession. This thesis was an attempt to explore expression of repressed desires in the film by applying the theoretical tool of psychoanalysis propounded by Sigmund Freud and others. By examining the dream of Kalikinkar Roy, one of the three major characters of the film, in relation to psychoanalytical theories explained by Freud in his book *Interpretation of Dreams*, this thesis draws a conclusion that Kalikinkar has repressed his desires for his own daughter-in-law.

Psychoanalysts believe that the system of human brain contains multiple instincts. One of these instincts is violent, destructive and anarchist. However, they are restrained by social norms, values and laws. They want to tear apart anyone they despise. They want to violate the laws and rules set by the state and the society. They want to rape any girl they find sexually attractive. They want to fornicate with their own mothers, sisters and daughters. But, they are part of a civilization and have to abide by laws and social values. Therefore, they refrain from expressing their true self. If it were not for legal, social and moral restrictions, the society would have been riddled with violence, anarchy and chaos. The character of Kalikinkdar is part of a civilization that takes pride in being different from the animal

kingdom where incest is insignificant and social restrictions about sexual relationship do not exist at all. It is therefore understandable that he cannot express his desires for his Doyamoyee, who is the wife of his own son. In the Hindu society, a daughter-in-law is like a daughter and it would be highly immoral for the father-in-law to have sexual relationship with her. It is considered to be a sin, and Kalikinkar, a pious man devoted to the goddess *Kali*, is well-aware of the social implications of committing this sinister act. Let alone fulfilling his desire, he cannot even discuss it with anyone. Therefore, he has to repress his desires, which are manifested through his dream.

Freud states that the human psyche has more than one aspect, and is structured into three parts, which he describes as the id, Ego and Super Ego. All these parts develop in different stages of human lives. These parts are actually systems in themselves – not parts of the brain nor are physical in any manner. The id is the source of animal instincts, and always drives people towards violence and chaos. The Ego prevents the id from driving people insane. The Super Ego is the apex authority of moral consciousness. If the Ego fails to suppress the id, the Super Ego comes into play. The Super Ego maintains sense and order in the human society by constantly suppressing the destructive id.

This thesis has examined Freud's ideas about the id, the Ego and the Superego by analyzing the concept of Oedipus complex in relation to the psychological study of the key characters of the film. In the film, Kalikinkar fantasizes about his daughter-in-law Doyamoyee while spending time with her. Doyamoyee is a young, sensual and demure girl. He cannot express his sexual desire for her because of moral restrictions, of which he seems to be a custodian in his village. He represses his desire for three years, and it is manifested through a dream only when Umaprasad, his son and Doyamoyee's husband, leaves home for study in Kolkata. In absence of his son, he receives bodily pleasure in the form of foot massage from Doyamoyee. And he sees a dream in which Doyamoyee appears to be an

avatar of his *Maa* (mother) Kali, the powerful Hindu goddess. By applying Freud's psychoanalytical theory, it can be concluded that Kalinkinkar's dream is a part of his unconscious plot to fulfill his sexual desire. After this dream, he begins to worship Doyamoyee as his mother goddess. So do other villagers. And Doyamoyee is separated from her husband. The film offers a role reversal: the old Kalikinkar acts like the son and treats his daughter-in-law as his mother. It adds to the conclusion that *Devi: The Goddess* is a film about expression of repressed desires.

To understand how Kalikinkar's Ego and Super-Ego might have repressed his id for years, it is important to understand norms and values of the nineteenth century rural Bengali society in which the film's drama unfolds. The film is set in a rural Bengal village in the late nineteenth century. It is not difficult to imagine how harsh the social norms and values could have been at that time, that too in the puritanical Bengali society. In the conservative society of the Indian sub-continent, sex is still considered to be a taboo. People are hesitant to talk about it in the public sphere. It is still an activity that people think must not be discussed openly and be done within the private sphere. Sexual relationship outside marriage is strictly forbidden by the law and the society. Likewise, sexual relationship with family member of the opposite sex is incest and hence considered to be a criminal offense. In such a repressive social set up, it was only natural that Kalikinkar, an old yet sprightly widower, did not get to discuss sex with anyone. Unlike in today's time, he was not exposed to books and films having sexual contents, which psychoanalysts believe could provide an outlet for satisfaction of the repressed libido. As he is a typical patriarch who is expected to maintain some level of personality, Kalikinkar repressed his sexual desire for years. It was only when Doyamoyee came to his house as Umaprasad's wife that Kalikinkar saw some means to relieve himself of his sexual urge. Of course, he could not have physical relationship with Doyamoyee. But, by being around her or having her massage his feet, he somehow fulfilled his desire. For him,

Umaprasad turned out to be a villain. He did not like his son's physical proximity with his own wife. For him, Umaprasad was a hurdle. For him, Umaprasad was a reminder of bitter reality that Doyamoyee was her own daughter-in-law and fantasizing about her was a sin. Hence the dream. Hence the drama. For Kalikinkar, the dream was a pretext under which he could create an opportunity to place his beautiful daughter-in-law in front of his own eyes all the time. It was a pretext to separate Umaprasad from Doyamoyee. It was also a pretext for Kalikinkar to avoid people's suspicion about his secret desire. On the whole, *Devi: The Goddess* appears like a story about religion, idolatry and mysticism. But, it is a story about desires repressed by the Super Ego. It looks like a story about conflict between Kalikinkar and Umaprasad over the divinely status of Doyamoyee. But, it is a story about devastating consequences of Kalikinkar's secret desire, which Doyamoyee has to bear with.

This film is not just about the repressed desire of Kalikinkar. Other characters are also forced to repress their desires. Umaprasad and Doyamoyee cannot live together because the husband needs to live in the city for higher education and the wife has to stay back to look after the ailing father-in-law. In the patriarchal society of the late nineteenth century Bengal, men are expected to go out, study, earn, head the family, dictate social norms and rule the country. On the other hand, women are expected to stay indoors, remain shy and uneducated, work household chores and not expected to involve in social or political activity. Because of these unfair social norms, Doyamoyee remains home while her husband is away for study. She does not want to accompany her, because she is part of the society and has meekly accepted social norms. But she feels deprived of marital bliss as she lives alone. She has to repress her desires. Even if she wants to fulfill her desire by leaving home, going to Kolkata to stay with her husband, she cannot do that because of social mores. At the same time, Umaprasad also has to repress his desires because he is also living alone in Kolkata. The two burn with the pain and anxiety for having to live separate while married.

After Kalinkinkar's dream, Doyamoyee is treated as a divine being and Umaprasad cannot go closer to her. He finds a few moments to talk to her, but consummating marriage would not be possible. Therefore, he has to repress his desires for his rightful wife due to the new situation created by his own father. So Kalinkinkar is not the only character who suppresses his desires. Two other key characters of the film also repress their desires. Nevertheless, each character represses their desires for different reasons. For Kalinkinkar, it is legal and social restrictions. For Umaprasad, it is the new environment in which his wife is separated. For Doyamoyee, it is the fear of religious persecutions. She initially does not begin that she is a goddess. But as days elapse, particularly after a dying village boy regains consciousness due to what people believe is her divine power, she begins to think that people are right. She abstains from sexual activity, fearing that the goddess *Kali* lives within her and she needs to protect her purity.

In the joint family headed by Kalinkinkar, there is another woman, another daughter-in-law. She is Harasundari, the wife of Kalinkinkar's oldest son. Harasundari looks gritty and grumpy all the time. Rarely is she seen chatting with Doyamoyee. There is a sense of sibling rivalry between them. When Kalinkinkar wakes up from the dream and worships Doyamoyee as a living goddess, Harasundari is apparently displeased. She chides her husband for believing in his father. She is mother of a five-year-old child, and is older than Doyamoyee. She is not as beautiful and sensual as Doyamoyee. This could be another reason she does not like Doyamoyee. But Doyamoyee is very innocent, and does not vent any ire against anyone, including Harasundari. This sibling rivalry between the two adds intrigue to the film. On the other hand, this angle also proves the point that Kalinkinkar is repressing his desires. The fact that he sees Doyamoyee in his dream and not Harasundari is important. It can be said that the old man subconsciously desires for Doyamoyee not only because she is younger and

attractive than her sister-in-law, but also because Harasundari is living with her husband. She is not lonely like Doyamoyee. And Kalikinkar does not get chance to spend time with her.

This thesis is important because it discusses a subject never touched by critics before. Future researchers can take it as a reference to analyze the Freudian undertone cinema and literature, and build on it to explore how Oedipus complex has shaped human relations within the family, particularly in the rural society as depicted in the setting of *Devi: The Goddess*.

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