



## The Evolution of Women Character's in Satyajit Ray's Films: Devi and Charulata

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### ABSTRACT:

This paper explores the evolution of women's characters in Satyajit Ray's films "Devi" [1960] and "Charulata" [1964], both set in Bengal with Devi. Satyajit Ray has shown the representation of female positions in the sociocultural atmosphere of Bengal in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Devi examines the negative outcome of patriarchal worship and superstition through the character of Doyamoyee, whose life becomes hell because of a dream that completely changed her life. "Charulata" tells the story of Charu, a Bengali educated women whose mind is full of creativity. Caught in a suffocating marriage, whose journey to self-awareness and intellectually highlights her subtle rebellion against social limitations. This paper believes that Ray's portrayal of these female characters shows an essential involvement with questions of gender, identity, and independence, showing an intellectual criticism of that oppressive organization that limits women's roles. By following the progression of Doyamoyee and Charu, the study sheds light on Ray's progressive cinematic vision and contribution to the discourse on the liberation of women in Indian cinema.

**Keywords:** Satyajit Ray, women, society, traditions

### SATYAJIT REY, THE NOVELISHT BEHIND THE FILMMAKER

Satyajit Re, best known for his contribution to cinema, was also an accomplished writer, particularly in Bengali literature. His literary works frequently show his numerous abilities and imaginative creativity.

**Work by Satyajit Rey in Literature:** some of his famous works are; *Feluda series* [1965-1992], *Professor Shonku series* [1961-1983], *Tarini khuro series* [1961-1983], *Standalone novel and short story*, *Our films, their films* [1976], *Ekei bole shooting* [1979], *Bishoy Chalachchitra* [1982], *Chalachchitra Atyachar* [1987], and many more.

**Historical and social context:** in the film Charulata and Devi, the female characters are intelligently perceived in specific context. With the beginning of the nineteenth century, Bengal experienced a great deal of intellectual, social, and cultural change. Movements were launched to liberate woman from age-old traditions, with equal education rights being highlighted. And through Ray's films we get an incredible image of these periods, when tradition coexisted with transformation, shedding light on how two frequently came into direct conflict.

During this time, most females were married before reaching puberty. When they were physically ready to have children, they were condition to think only about motherhood.

*Devi is a short story issued by "Prabhakar Kumar" in [1914] and set in colonial Bengal in the early twentieth century.*

The tale set in a small town where villagers mistake a young girl as the goddess Kali and how a superstitious dream transformed her life beyond recognition.

Satyajit Ray directed film "Charulata" which was released in 1964. It is based on Tagore's novella '[Nastanirh] "The Broken Nest"' which takes place in the late nineteenth-century Bengal during the Bengal renaissance. In Charulata, a wealthy yet lonely wife discovers herself. Bengali culture finds significance resonance in Devi' and Charulata'' because to their examination of behind human emotions and society dynamic. Both are timeless masterpieces of literature and film because they provide moving insights in to Bengal's historical shifts and cultural ethos.

**Analysis of Devi:** the story unfolds in culturally rich milieu of rural Bengal, within the mystical life of its women, Devi is the saga of Doyamoyee, a young wife who is deified by her father-in law as an avatar [reincarnation] of Kali "Hindu goddess"

This film looks at superstition and patriarchal society, as well as the mental toll of being born into a divine role,

**Extremism in Religion:** “Devi” critically examines the dangers of blind faith and superstition. Kalikinkar’s trust in Devi’s supernatural energy originates from a dream, and it completely destroys her existence. His dream becomes a curse for her, resulting in her extreme psychological and physical suffering. In the name of religion.

**Gender roles in Devi:** the film makes a solid argument against patriarchal culture’s exploitation of women. The movie shows how Doyamoyee loses her sense of individuality when she changes from a caring wife to an admired deity in a patriarchal society. Her pain is caused by the men in her life, particularly her father-in-law, the leader of the household, who controls her destiny and identity. Doyamoyee is a victim of a family run by men, and as a result of Kalkikinkar’s obsession with her being an avatar, she ends up dying her desire.

They also give two characters who provide fresh air in the tale. Devi’s husband Umaprashad, is an educated man who is different from his father, and according to his father, he was influenced by Britishers and too modernized. Umaprashad was inspired by Raja Ram Mohan Roy. And he really wanted to do something for people. There was a moment in the film where he was ready to convince his friend’s family to let his friend get married to a widow. When he got to know he loved her, it showed how educated he was because these things were taboo at that time. Umaprashad tries to convince his father a lot, but ends up getting nothing out of it. He even wanted to run away with his wife because he could see her pain and convince her as well, but when they reached the boat, then because of her strong sense of duty, her deep psychological upbringing, and societal expectations, Doyamoyee chooses not to escape with Umaprashad. She is paralyzed by her fear of social rejection, and her emotional imprisonment, which tragically shows the effects of patriarchy and blind faith.

Second character Doyamoyee’s sister-in-law, Harasundri, seems more educated than most of the men in the household, and she believes that Doyamoyee is not an avatar, but because she has no position or power in the household, rather than being a good mother and wife, she is unable to help Doyamoyee.

*The movie also highlights the struggle between tradition and progress by contrasting Doyamoyee with her sister-in-law Harasundri, who represents a more sophisticated and educated attitude.*

**Cinematic Approaches:** Ray is a master of symbolism and visual storytelling. The combination of light and darkness in the videography enhances Doyamoyee’s sense of helplessness. Ray uses close-up to show her inner misery, and the rhythm of the movie does a good job of creating tension. The disturbing mood of the movie is enhanced and its themes are reinforced by Ali Akbar Khan’s music.

**Impact on Cultural and society:** “Devi” was a daring criticism of the socio-religious context of that moment, challenging tradition and gender stereotypes. It generated a lot of discussion about women’s role and the impact of superstition on Indian society.

**Character study of Devi:** Doyamoyee is the main character in Satyajit Ray’s 1960 film “Devi”. Doyamoyee is a very complex character. The story revolves around life and how it changes through tragedy. In the beginning of the film, she seems to be nothing more than a young, innocent woman who complies with traditional ideas of what her role should be as a wife. In the starting of the film, we saw her caring for her husband and treating her father-in-law as if he were some kind of god.

It seems as though Doyamoyee is also losing her mind when her portrayal as an example of traditional feminine purity and obedience is suddenly called into question by Kalikinkar’s declaration that he has learned the dream that Doyamoyee is an avatar of goddess Kali.

The people of the villages idolize Doyamoyee and regard her with fear since her father-in-law is so sure to have seen her as Devi in his dream. She is forced to unhappily embrace the new role by household and cultural pressure, despite her own disbelief and discomfort.

Doyamoyee, as Devi, begins to take on the heavenly identity not because it is something she believes in personally, but because of the strong expectations and beliefs of everyone around her. Her connection and standing in the family drastically change as a result of this transformation. Rationalist and contemporary thinker Umaprashad is growing more and more distant from his wife because of the power dynamic between them. Devi’s position adds to Doyamoyee’s physical and emotional isolation. She is imprisoned by the strict patriarchal and religious orthodox structures inside her own home. Her independence is totally taken away, and she is viewed as an object of worship and superstition rather than as a living, breathing human being with her own needs and feelings. She lives under constant pressure due to the villagers’ naïve faith in her divinity, which causes her loneliness. The film’s tragic ending emphasizes the terrible effects of this enforced holiness.

A young boy [khokha] who is taken to Doyamoyee for the treatment dies as a sequence of events that are set up by her position as a living goddess. Doyamoyee is deeply shaken by this accident, which also brings attention to the dangerous connection of superstition, faith, and human weakness. Her painful and final understanding of the awful reality of her forced divinity exposes the serious shortcomings in the social structure that put her in such a precarious situation. The terrible results that can occur when people are forced into symbols against their will are painfully explored in Doyamoyee’s story, which represents conflict between tradition and modernity and the deadly power of blind faith.

**Themes in “Devi”:** The film “Devi” created by Satyajit Ray delves into too numerous rooted themes. The main topic represented by the characters of Umaprashad and Doyamoyee, is the struggle between tradition and modernity. Doyamoyee’s transformation into a living goddess serves as a critique of the terrible consequences that can result from extreme religious devotion and blind faith, as well as how superstition can win over sense.

Another important theme is the oppression of women in patriarchal societies. Doyamoyee’s forced virtue deprives her of her individuality, highlighting the ways in which women are frequently subjected to position-established societal norms and male power.

Another theme is loneliness and isolation, as Doyamoyee’s divinity separates her from her family, especially her husband. The psychological and physical impact that intense religious commitment has on people is highlighted by this.

*Satyajit, Ray, s film Devi talks about superstition and patriarchy through the character of Doymoyee's tragic story.*

**Analysis of "Charulata"** Satyajit Ray Charulata, released in 1964, is an adaptation of Rabindranath Tagore's novella [the Broken Nest]. This film talks about loneliness and the unfulfilled desire of woman "Charulata" and the complex dynamic between her husband and brother-in-law set in 19<sup>th</sup> century Bengal.

Madhabi Mukherjee portrays Charulata, an artistic and educated woman forced to live unhappy life. Shre is financially secure but feel unloved because of her spouse, Bhupati, is a rich progressive man who work as newspaper editor who is busy with his publication most of the time. There is no denying Charulata's loneliness she lives in tastefully furnished but empty home with no one there to talk, and the sudden Arrival of Amal's changes the life of three of them completely.

Shailen Mukerjee portrays character of Bhupati stand in progressive and educated people of times. It's admirable that he is so committed to his political newspaper and beliefs, but he ignores his wife's emotional needs. Though he is kind considered, he is mostly unaware of Charulata's increasing isolation. The main theme of the film is this emotional neglect, which emphasizes how people how really care for us can unintentionally hurt the people they care about.

The entrance of Bhupati's younger cousin, Amal played by Soumitra Chatterjee, changes their life. Amal is a pleasant, easy-going and literary-minded young guy who offers Charulata the friendship and intellectual company she seeks. Their friendship founded on a common love of reading. Gradually blossom in to something more. Amal presence awakens Charulata's suppressed passions, and their growing intimacy causes a subtle yet significant strain in the home. Ray's use of symbolism and cinematic methods enhance the tale.

"Charulata" is a moving representation of a woman inner existence and difficulties. Ray's delicate direction and subtle performance, particularly Madhabi Mukherjee as Charulata, add depth and realism to the character.

*This movie is timeless classic for many reasons, from the music to the casting and how beautifully each character has played their role.*

**Character study of Charulata:** Satyajit Ray Charulata, the character is extremely complicated. She is an intellectual, kind, and artistic woman who is restricted by her household and society norms. Charulata is married to Bhupati, a wealthy and progressive man who works as newspaper editor, she lives a life of material comfort but emotional isolation. Her husband's loyalty with his political newspaper makes her feel unloved and lonely. Charulata's days are filled with loneliness and desire for intellectual and emotional support. She takes her protection in her artistic activities and intellectual curiosity, and often appears reading or staring out at the world through glasses, representing her desire to connect with something larger than her surroundings. Despite her believed passive character Charulata has quiet strength and a vibrant inner existence.

The entrance of Amal sparks Charulata's emotional awakening. Amal, a charming and literary-minded young man, offers her intellectual excitement she seeks. Their friendship, which began with common love for reading, eventually expends, revealing Charulata's hidden desire and emotional needs. This relationship become source of conflict as Charulata's affection for Amal's grow stronger.

*Charulata's conflict within it get worse by the social restricts of the time. Her feelings for Amal's go against the norms of loyalty and manners, causing her major problem.*

**Themes in Charulata:** Charulata, by Satyajit Ray explores many themes and I am going to talk about few of them.

**Loneliness:** is the primary theme in Charulata, it talks about her emotional isolation even when she is with people. She craves for husband's attention because he is busy most of the time with his news paper work. And that's become the reason for her loneliness.

**Self-discovery:** in the movie Charulata, finds her true self because of Amal, her husband's cousin, who reveals her true talent and love for literature and art and because of this, she explored her own identity. Rather than being just a homemaker and wife.

**Gender roles:** the film is also talks about gender roles in marriage set by society and how they affect woman's mental health, and this the one of the reasons why Bhupati never really understand what Charulata wants from him he has provided her with every kind of luxury, but all she wanted was his time.

**Faith And Betrayal:** one of the key themes is the emotional betrayal that Charulata experiences, even in absence of obvious adultery. It puts into questions where trust and loyalty end in relationships.

**Progress:** the film also talks about changing culture and progress in Bengali literature, the tension between traditional and modern ideas, and innovative ideas. And that's very visible in the story line and character of film.

These are some major themes of Charulata, and with their help, Satyajit Ray has explored culture changes and modernization in Bengal. The film talks about self-discovery and personal awakening.

**Analysis of both the Films;** The films Devi and Charulata, directed by Satyajit Ray, talks about women condition in patriarchal society. Devi set in [1960] Bengal talks about character "Doyamoyee" a young women whose father-in-law believes she is an avatar of goddess [Kali], because of a dream this belief completely changed her life in to hell. The film makes an important point of patriarchal system that oppress women and the danger of blind faith. Doyamoyee losses her agency can be seen in her transformation from a lively-women into a deity. She started accepting her faith as she grows more

and more alone showing the sifting influence of culture and religious expectations. The movie end with terrible ending, in which Doyamoyee losses her mind due to inhumane worship that's become the reason for her physical and psychological death.

In the contrast, "Charulata" [ 1964] talks about intellectual awakening and self-discovery of a women name Charulata, she is a lonely homemaker. Charulata feels neglected by her husband, who is busy most of the time with his newspaper work. Charulata has established connection with Bhupati's cousin Amal. She finds and express herself creatively because of this friendship. Charulata's journey involves self-empowerment, in contrast to Doyamoyee's, she finds her gift for writing through her encounter with Amal, and this gave her strong feeling of purpose and identity outside of her home.

Both films are set in their homes and talks about the social norms and expectation of society from women. Doyamoyee's house becomes a place religion and patriarchy that's suffocating Doyamoyee. Her struggle is reflected in the interior and gloomy lighting.

In Charulata, on other hand, the home serves as place of potential freedom and imprisonment. The bright large spaces emphasize Charulata isolation.

Devi talks about superstition in religion and patriarchal system. And Charulata talks about self-discovery of a women. Both of the characters are very complex, and both of these films show how good Satyajit Ray's work is. And how beautifully he has shown the woman life and her struggle in 19<sup>th</sup> century Bengal.

Conclusion; the way that Satyajit Ray presented women in Devi'' and Charulata'' offers an engaging analysis of how female roles have changed over time in Indian cinema through these films, Ray praises the complexity and bravery of women exploring their identities in society that is challenging, while also criticizing the patriarchal standers of 19<sup>th</sup> century Bengal.

*The first suffered study of a woman's awareness in Indian cinema that seeks to define itself in terms other than those presk.*

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