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**Bengali Cinema and the Body Politics of
Representation: Locating Agency in Aparna
Sen's Films *Parama* and *Paromitar Ekdin***

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Abstract

This paper examines two of Aparna Sen's films *Parama* ((The Ultimate Women) and *Paromitar Ekdin* (House of Memories) and locates the leading women characters of these films as reflections of the gradual progression of the feminist movements in India. Through a narrative analysis of the two films, focusing on the visual aesthetics and character development of the female protagonists, the paper investigates how Aparna Sen challenges conventional societal norms and offers alternative representations of women's agency. The paper highlights the significance of body politics in shaping the portrayal of female characters and their struggles for self-identity, autonomy, and empowerment. Drawing upon feminist film theory and cultural studies, this paper critically analyzes the portrayal of women in these films and the strategies employed by the director to subvert patriarchal constructs of femininity. This research also considers the social and historical context in which the films were made, providing insights into the changing landscape of women's rights and gender dynamics in Bengali society.

Keywords: *Agency, Aparna Sen, Bengali Cinema, Body Politics, Representation*

Introduction:

Aparna Sen, a luminary in Indian cinema, emerges as a distinctive voice in her exploration of the body politics of representation (Roy and Sengupta, 2014). She is a renowned Bengali filmmaker, who has made a significant contribution to the world of cinema through her thought-provoking narratives and strong female characters (Mitra, 2014). Sen's films address the particular issue of women in Indian society (Sanyal & Bharadwaj, 2019). In choosing the themes and directing the films, Aparna Sen has attained a remarkable level of perfection that distinguishes her from other directors (Sengupta, 2018). She was largely drawn to the feminist philosophy when selecting themes for her films, although she also dealt with other issues and subjects (Ramanathan, 2009).

This research study delves into two seminal films directed by Sen *Parama* (1985) and *Paromitar Ekdin* (2000) to unravel the nuanced portrayal of women and the embodiment of agency within the sociocultural fabric. In *Parama*, Sen navigates the complex terrain of female subjectivity, challenging normative constructs that confine women to predefined roles. The protagonist, Parama, becomes a canvas upon which Sen paints a narrative that questions societal expectations, addressing issues of

autonomy and self-discovery (Goswami,2022). *Paromitar Ekdin*, on the other hand, confronts the intricacies of familial and societal expectations through the lens of two female characters. Sen skillfully crafts a cinematic space where the body becomes a site of resistance, negotiation, and empowerment. This research endeavors to critically analyze Sen's directorial choices, cinematography, and narrative strategies to unpack the body politics inherent in the representation of women. By situating agency within the cinematic realm, the paper seeks to contribute to ongoing discussions on feminism, representation, and cultural identity in Bengali cinema. As we traverse the cinematic landscapes of *Parama* and *Paromitar Ekdin*, we explore how Aparna Sen's visionary storytelling transcends the screen, challenging conventional narratives and fostering a deeper understanding of the evolving dynamics of agency and representation. This article attempts to understand how the patriarchal system forces women to lose their identities after marriage. Furthermore, the article not only makes an effort to analyze the psychological conflict experienced by the protagonist Parama as a result of the subordination created by her family, but it also looks at Parama's rediscovery of her former identity after being in a situation that led to a suicide attempt.

In the context of Bengali cinema, Body Politics plays a significant role in shaping narratives, characters, and themes. In some films, like *Rajkahini* (2015) and *Arekti Premer Golpo* (2010) women's bodies have been objectified and portrayed primarily for the 'Male Gaze', perpetuating patriarchal ideologies (Macdonald, 2009). However, there have also been instances where Bengali cinema has challenged such objectification and represented women as empowered individuals, with agency over their bodies and lives. Like many other film industries, Bengali cinema has also influenced beauty standards and body image perceptions. Certain portrayals of actors and actresses as role models with specific body types have the potential to impact the audience's self-perception and create unrealistic beauty ideals (Mukherjee, 2016). Bengali cinema often addresses social issues that impact bodies and physical well-being. Films have been made on topics like healthcare, disability, malnutrition, and other public health concerns, shedding light on the challenges faced by individuals and communities (Pierson, 2020). In a society with diverse social strata, Bengali cinema has explored how caste and class differences manifest in the treatment and representation of bodies. This exploration often exposes the discrimination and prejudices prevalent in society. Bengali cinema, like the broader Indian film industry, has gradually started exploring LGBTQ+ themes (Bhattacharya, 2022). The term 'agency' describes a person's ability to act independently and make their own free decisions (Clegg, 2006). Thus, the term 'agency' often refers to both macro and micro-level collectives that act. To put it another way, any social being, whether an individual or a group, can be thought of as having agency (Emirbayer & Mische,1998). Similar to this, structure frequently refers to both macro and micro-level events, including human interaction. The representation of queer bodies in cinema contributes to discussions about acceptance, identity, and social integration (Wharton,1991). Bengali cinema has a history of political narratives, and the portrayal of bodies can be symbolic of power dynamics ((Biswas, 2021).

Bengali Cinema and the Body Politics of Representation:
Locating Agency in Aparna Sen's Films *Parama* and *Paromitar Ekdin*

Aparna Sen's Bengali cinema, the exploration of Body Politics holds immense significance for various reasons: Aparna Sen's films often delve into the lives of women, their struggles, and the way society perceives and regulates their bodies. By portraying complex female characters and their experiences, she challenges traditional gender roles and stereotypes, bringing issues of body autonomy and agency to the forefront. In the context of body politics, questions of identity and self-expression are crucial. Aparna Sen's films may explore how individuals navigate societal expectations and norms related to their bodies, whether it's about body image, sexual orientation, or personal choices. Bengali society, like any other, is influenced by social norms and taboos surrounding bodies and physical appearances. Aparna Sen's cinema might address these taboos and challenge society's preconceived notions, encouraging conversations around body diversity and acceptance. Body politics often involve power dynamics, where some individuals or groups exert control over others based on their bodies or physical attributes. Aparna Sen's films may delve into the imbalances of power, the impact of patriarchy, and how it affects individuals differently based on their bodies. The exploration of body politics in Aparna Sen's cinema might intersect with other social issues like class, caste, and religion. The intersections of these factors can create unique challenges and opportunities for individuals concerning their bodies and identities (Hand, 2021). Overall, Aparna Sen's engagement with body politics in Bengali cinema allows for a deeper understanding of society's complexities and offers a platform for dialogue and reflection on pertinent social issues. Through her art, she has the power to influence perceptions, promote empathy, and inspire change in the way bodies are perceived and treated in the context of Bengali culture (Bakshi & Dasgupta, 2017).

Aparna Sen: A Trailblazer Filmmaker

"Neither do I make experimental cinema, nor do I make formula films. I make films that are true to my artistic vision" – Aparna Sen

Aparna Sen came to the world of acting through the film *Teen Kanya*, (Three Daughters, 1961) directed by legendary filmmaker Satyajit Ray. Later she worked in the films *Jana Aranya*, (The Middleman), *Pikoo*, (1980), and *Aranyer Din Ratri*, (Days and Nights in the Forest, 1970). For several years, Aparna Sen produced her particular brand of Bengali leading lady. She portrayed the sexually liberated, educated, honest, "street smart," working woman who mixed freely with men in Calcutta during the 1960s and 1970s, a time when food insecurity, unemployment, and economic inequality coexisted with a growing "cabaret culture" that drew middle-class women into its vile world of prostitution, greed, and crime (Gooptu, 2011, pp 176) and either in the 1971 film *Ekhoni* (1971), directed by Tapan Sinha, as the college student who becomes pregnant and has her lover leave her, or in the 1973 film *Basanta Bilap*, directed by Dinen Gupta, as the intelligent working lady who prevails in her arguments and eventually falls in love with the young man in the neighboring house.

In addition to taking home the National Awards for Best Director and Best Feature Film in 1981, Aparna Sen's first full-length film, *36 Chowringhee Lane*, also signaled the entry of a filmmaker

working in the later stages of “Parallel” and “New Cinema”, or “Middle Cinema,” which is distinct in form, style, and intellectual complexity. Her work differs from parallel cinema in terms of pace and the variety of individuals she chooses, even though her films typically realistically depict societal and domestic difficulties. It is debatable if Sen’s interactions with Ray, Mrinal Sen, and Ghatak influenced the realistic women characters she developed for her films, which function as agents in patriarchal Bengali/Indian culture. It might be argued that Aparna Sen’s films have a larger audience outside of Bengal due to the selection of characters and circumstances that are informed by yet transcend the current socio-political landscape in West Bengal (Gooptu, 2011, pp 11-127).

Theoretical framework:

This article employs a feminist theoretical framework, encompassing the ‘Body Politics’ theory, ‘Objectification’ theory and ‘Male Gaze’ theory. Body Politics refers to the procedures and laws used by societal authorities to manage the human body as well as the conflict over the scope of personal and societal control (Bhattacharyya, 2018). In Body Politics, there are many different types of power at work, including institutional power found in laws and government, disciplinary power enforced in economic production, discretionary power used in consumption, and personal power negotiated in close relationships (Brown & Gershon, 2017). Body politics was first used in this sense in the 1970s, during the “second wave” of the feminist movement in the United States. Body politics originally involved the fight against objectification of the female body, and violence against women and girls, and the campaign for reproductive rights for women. “The personal is the political” became a slogan that captured the sense that domestic contests for equal rights in the home and within sexual relationships are crucial to the struggle for equal rights in the public (Shaw, n.d).

Objectification Theory, developed by Barbara Fredrickson and Tomi-Ann Roberts in 1997, investigates how societal objectification of women leads to internalization, in which women see themselves as objects to be appraised based on their looks. Self-objectification can lead to excessive body awareness, anxiety, humiliation, and poor mental health. It contends that the widespread cultural practice of sexualizing and objectifying women causes psychological anguish, eating disorders, depression, and other mental health problems. Understanding this idea helps to explain how societal norms influence women’s lived experiences and the accompanying mental health concerns.

Laura Mulvey’s essay ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’ is one of these groundbreaking ideas. Mulvey introduced the concept of the ‘Male Gaze’ and discussed the representation of women in classical Hollywood cinema. In a play, she writes, viewers see women through the eyes of a male character. When the female character enters the screen, the viewer sees her as the heroine of the male character. The style of her entrance, her attire, and her illumination are embellished as if she were the object of desire. In this way, the viewer perceives her female character as an object of desire with her male vision. According to Mulvey, one of the joys of the cinematic experience is narcissism, which is another aspect of scopophilia. Much of Mulvey’s theory of feminism was inspired by Sigmund Freud’s

Bengali Cinema and the Body Politics of Representation:
Locating Agency in Aparna Sen's Films *Parama* and *Paromitar Ekdin*

(1910) and Jean Lacan's theories. Therefore, it is reasonable to identify him as the pioneer of the psychoanalytic research genre of film. Although Jean-Louis Baudry and Christian Metz have done some theoretical work on this psychoanalytic aspect of the film before her, she draws an analogy between Lacan's "Mirror Stage" and the Narrative Cinema Convention. Through the lens of these theories, the paper seeks to unpack how Sen's directorial choices challenge traditional gender norms and reshape the cinematic narrative, offering a nuanced understanding of agency and representation

Ms. Parama must remain lonely in Parama

Parama (1985), meaning "The Lost One", the story revolves around Parama, (played by Rakhee Gulzar) a middle-aged woman living in Kolkata (Calcutta). She is married to a successful businessman and leads a seemingly content life in a traditional, conservative household. However, beneath her composed exterior lies a conflicted and introspective individual. One day, Parama comes across Rahul (played by Mukul Sharma), a young, progressive man who challenges her perceptions and ideas about life. Their chance encounter sparks a friendship that gradually transforms into an emotional and intellectual bond. Through her interactions with Rahul, Parama begins to question her identity, her role as a woman, and the choices she has made in her life. As the relationship between Parama and Rahul deepens, she finds herself drawn to his progressive outlook on life and his open-mindedness. This connection makes her increasingly dissatisfied with her traditional, conformist life, leaving her torn between societal expectations and her desire for self-discovery.

This theme emphasizes the importance of understanding oneself beyond societal roles and expectations. The film critically examines the restrictive gender roles imposed upon women in traditional Indian society. Parama's struggle to break free from these norms and find her voice highlights the challenges faced by women seeking autonomy and independence. Parama's emotional and intellectual connection with Rahul becomes a source of liberation for her. It symbolizes the idea that true freedom can come from breaking away from rigid societal norms and embracing progressive thinking. The film portrays the clash of generations and ideologies between Parama's traditional upbringing and Rahul's progressive beliefs. This generational conflict emphasizes the need for open dialogue and understanding between different age groups. In the film *Parama*, she challenges conventional norms of femininity and body image through the protagonist, Parama. Throughout the film, Parama's inner conflicts and desires are examined, revealing the complexities of her character beyond conventional expectations. She struggles with her role as a wife and homemaker, feeling dissatisfied and unfulfilled in her traditional married life. This exploration of her inner world goes against the common notion of women solely finding fulfillment in their roles as wives and mothers. Parama grapples with her sexual desires and body image insecurities. The film delves into her emotional and psychological journey as she explores her sexuality, indicating that women have their desires and need not suppress them due to societal norms or expectations.

Parama deftly examines Body Politics in the context of cultural norms and personal liberty. Rakhee Gulzar's character, Parama, becomes a symbol of resistance as her body becomes a battleground for autonomy. The film questions established gender norms by presenting Parama's defiance of societal expectations placed on women. Her actions represent a quest for agency, surpassing the constraints imposed by conventional conventions. The story explores the intersections of class and gender, recognising the impact of privilege on Parama's ability to challenge traditions. Despite societal reaction and solitude, Parama's journey represents self-discovery and empowerment. The film quietly criticises the social stigma attached to women who depart from traditional roles, emphasizing the widespread control over their bodies. *Parama* is a striking critique on body politics, embodying the intricacies of personal freedom, societal expectations, and the junction of gender and class in the protagonist's body. Aparna Sen's superb storytelling depicts the complexities of Parama's resistance, depicting the body as a space where cultural conventions are challenged and reinterpreted.

The film may feature scenes in which the protagonist, Parama, is objectified—being valued exclusively for her looks or conventional ideals of femininity. This could emerge as scenes in which she is pressured to adhere to beauty standards, or where her opinions, feelings, and wants are ignored in favour of her physical characteristics. One significant scene involves a photo shoot in which Parama, who is initially hesitant, is persuaded to model. This experience changes how she is perceived by everyone around her, with her physical appearance being the dominant emphasis. The shoot depicts her transition from a typical homemaker to an object of artistic appreciation, emphasizing the conflict between her personal wishes and society expectations. The film's portrayal of Parama's experiences may shed light on the psychological effects of objectification on women's mental health and well-being. This could include portrayals of poor self-esteem, internalized cultural judgments, or issues with identity and self-worth. The narrative may also incorporate instances of empowerment or resistance to objectification. Parama may express her autonomy, question society conventions, or seek fulfillment beyond established gender roles, exhibiting perseverance in the face of objectifying demands. Consider how class, culture, and societal expectations interact with gender to shape Parama's experiences of objectification. The film might look into how these crossing identities shape her sense of self and the difficulties she confronts when navigating her social surroundings.

Parama's journey is one of agency and empowerment as she navigates the complex web of societal expectations and carves her unique path. Born into a traditional and conservative society, Parama faces numerous challenges and constraints, but her determination and strength of character propel her forward. From a young age, Parama is expected to conform to the roles defined by her community, which often restrict women's aspirations and ambitions. However, Parama questions these norms and refuses to be confined to predetermined paths. She challenges the notion that women should only focus on domestic responsibilities and dreams of pursuing a career and education. Parama faces gender-based discrimination and stereotypes as she ventures into male-dominated fields. People doubt her abilities and question her choices, but she remains undeterred. Through hard work and

Bengali Cinema and the Body Politics of Representation:
Locating Agency in Aparna Sen's Films *Parama* and *Paromitar Ekdin*

perseverance, she shatters these stereotypes and becomes a role model for other young girls in her community. Parama's journey is also intertwined with her experiences in love and relationships. She finds herself torn between societal expectations of arranged marriage and her desire for love based on mutual understanding and respect. She bravely confronts her family and insists on having a say in choosing her life partner, challenging the age-old tradition of arranged marriages. As Parama gains more independence and agency, she recognizes the importance of helping others in her community find their voice. She becomes a change agent, advocating for gender equality and women's rights. Through community initiatives, she works to break down barriers and promote opportunities for women to pursue their dreams. Parama's journey is not without its conflicts. She grapples with finding a balance between preserving cultural traditions and embracing modernity. She seeks to adapt certain aspects of her heritage that are progressive and inclusive while challenging regressive practices that hinder progress.

Aparna Sen's film *Parama* investigates the 'gendered' experience through the lens of Mulvey's 'Male Gaze' theory. Within the cinematic narrative, the film navigates the gaze and agency of the female heroine, Parama. Sen's directorial decisions, along with the visual components, help to undermine established gender norms. The film disrupts the traditional masculine gaze by focusing on Parama's subjective experience. Sen defies the conventional objectification of women in cinema through visual narrative, presenting a nuanced picture of Parama's individuality and wants. The cinematography and framing deviate from the male-centric perspective, allowing Parama's body to become a source of agency rather than mere spectacle. Sen's narrative choices are consistent with feminist critiques of traditional cinema, emphasizing Parama's interiority and complexities. Within the frameworks of Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema, the film deconstructs established power dynamics, giving a cinematic experience that transcends the objectification of women and provides a platform for female subjectivity and agency. By challenging and defying standard gendered visual conventions, *Parama* contributes to the progress of cinema.

This film acknowledges the intersection of gender with other aspects of identity, such as class and social status. Parama's interactions with other characters from different socioeconomic backgrounds highlight the varying challenges faced by women across different strata of society, further reinforcing the importance of understanding women's experiences in their entirety. A central theme in feminist film theory is the critique of patriarchy, and *Parama* subtly addresses this issue. The film exposes the limitations imposed on women by a patriarchal society and questions the unequal power dynamics within marriages and familial relationships. It challenges the traditional notion of male dominance and raises questions about the suppression of women's desires and aspirations. *Parama* also explores the potential for female solidarity and empowerment. The character of Krishna ((played by Aparna Sen), Parama's friend, serves as a supportive figure who encourages her to question societal norms and find her path. This portrayal of female friendship and solidarity counters the notion of women as competitors and highlights the strength that can be found in women supporting each other. One of the

most frequently introduced ideas among feminist cinema scholars is pleasure. Mulvey's main justification is to reject the enjoyment of the story. According to Wollen's delight, the critics discover that the character Parama would have avoided being "devoured" by the strategic 'Male Gaze' had the filmmaker transcended the object position and taken the role of the subject. (Chatterji, 2002, p. 83). The main paradox is that a woman's beauty need not outweigh her significance to her story and the film's audience. The camera is voyeuristic throughout Rahul and Parama's passionate moments. It takes advantage of Parama's fetishist image by emphasizing fragments as symbolic replacements that are typical of fetishism and using her body as a source of spectacle through close-ups, repetitions, alternation of denial and access, and close-ups.

The decision to live alone with her daughter is made by Parama at the end of *Parama*. Many questions are raised by this movie, such as how she will live her life as a single woman in Indian society. What possible repercussions can Parama and her daughter encounter in this patriarchal society? Additionally, this movie features two generations. In contrast to her daughter, who represents the current generation and accepts her mother's identity and lives with Parama, Parama represents tradition and finds it difficult to leave her family and husband. Overall, *Parama* can be analyzed through feminist film theory as it raises important questions about gender, agency, subjectivity, and power dynamics. Aparna Sen's portrayal of Parama's journey of self-discovery and her challenges to societal norms provides a thought-provoking exploration of women's experiences and offers a feminist perspective on the complexities of female identity and liberation.

Paromitar Ekdin: moving towards mature choices

Paromitar Ekdin (2000), referring to "House of Memories", further showcases Sen's exploration of female identity and relationships (Dhar, 2020). This film explores the generation gap between Sanaka Sanyal (played by Aparna Sen) and Paromita (played by Rituparna Sengupta), representing the clash between traditional values and modern aspirations. Their different outlooks on life create tension and misunderstandings, but the film also emphasizes the importance of empathy and communication across generations. The researcher observed that this film highlights the complexities faced by women in society, portraying Sanaka's struggle to balance her desires with the expectations of her family. The film delves into the intricacies of family relationships, particularly the bond between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law. It explores how mutual understanding and acceptance are crucial for a harmonious family life and reflects on the changing social fabric of India, where traditional values are evolving in the face of urbanization and modernization. It questions societal norms and expectations while acknowledging the significance of preserving cultural heritage.

Aparna Sen's film *Paromitar Ekdin* offers a nuanced investigation of Body Politics, diving into the complexities of cultural expectations, familial connections, and the changing position of women. Paromita is at the heart of the film, her body becoming a canvas expressing the various struggles and negotiations inherent in the complicated web of cultural standards. The story deftly knits together the

Bengali Cinema and the Body Politics of Representation:
Locating Agency in Aparna Sen's Films *Parama* and *Paromitar Ekdin*

strands of Body Politics, depicting Paromita's body as a battleground for the competing expectations imposed on women. Her body is subject to the demands of traditional roles—wife and mother—imposed by society's standards within the familial environment. Sen interrogates these assumptions through her directorial perspective, challenging their impact on women's agency and autonomy. By diving into generational intricacies, the film goes beyond a simple indictment of contemporary norms. Body Politics is explored in the film using photography and narrative structure. Sen uses visual storytelling to illustrate the power relations linked with women's bodies, challenging the conventional gaze and allowing for nuanced representations. Paromita's body is transformed into a site of resistance and negotiation, encapsulating the altering dynamics of women's positions in a patriarchal culture. *Paromitar Ekdin* is a stunning remark on women's bodies' transforming potential (Dhar, 2020). Sen's realistic depiction of Sanaka's challenges within the familial and cultural framework adds to the larger conversation about gender politics. The film tackles difficult issues, delving into the complexities of womanhood, autonomy, and cultural expectations, finally leaving the audience with a profound contemplation on the complicated interaction of power and the female body in a changing social landscape.

In the context of *Paromitar Ekdin*, it explores themes related to how women are perceived, treated, and navigate societal expectations. How the society in which women live objectifies them, whether overtly or indirectly. This could emerge as scenes displaying excessive beauty standards, the monetization of women's bodies, or situations in which women are valued solely for their physical appearance. Investigating the psychological repercussions of objectification for women's mental health and self-esteem. This could be demonstrated by characters who struggle with body image difficulties, low self-esteem, or internalised cultural messages about their worth. Perhaps the film depicts moments of empowerment or resistance to objectification. Characters may defy society's standards, establish their autonomy, or find common ground with others facing similar challenges. Consider how race, class, and sexuality intersect with gender to shape objectification experiences. The video may show how these intersecting identities shape women's lived experiences and mental health risks.

In *Paromitar Ekdin*, the representation of women's bodies appears to reflect the complexities and societal expectations surrounding femininity. The film might depict different female characters with various body types, ages, and appearances, reflecting the diversity of women in society. Aparna Sen's portrayal might challenge conventional beauty standards and provide a more realistic depiction of women's bodies. By doing so, the film could contribute to body positivity and promote acceptance of different body types and appearances. Moreover, the film could highlight how society's emphasis on physical appearance can impact women's self-esteem and confidence. It might explore the pressures women face to conform to certain standards and the resulting emotional toll this can take on their well-being. *Paromitar Ekdin* deals with women's issues and relationships in a mature way; the director emphasizes that women can achieve self-realization and self-fulfillment outside of marriage negotiations by navigating social norms and forming a variety of other relationships (Amanjith, 2021).

The film examines the patriarchal structures prevalent in society and the prescribed gender roles. Sanaka the mother-in-law, represents the older generation, adhering to traditional values and patriarchal norms. Paromita, the daughter-in-law, on the other hand, represents the younger generation, striving for independence and questioning societal expectations. The film challenges these gender roles and highlights the struggles women face in negotiating their identities within a male-dominated framework. *Paromitar Ekdin* delves into the power dynamics within the family, highlighting the lack of agency experienced by women. Sanaka, despite her adherence to traditional values, remains confined within her role as a wife and mother, denied the opportunity to pursue her aspirations. Paromita, however, challenges these restrictions and seeks autonomy in her life. The film explores how women navigate power imbalances and assert their agency within familial and societal constraints. The film explores the complexities of motherhood and the emotional bonds between mothers and daughters-in-law. Sanaka's love for her son often conflicts with her relationship with Paromita, resulting in a strained dynamic. The film questions the expectations placed on mothers and the impact these expectations have on their relationships with other women. It also challenges the notion that motherhood is an inherent source of fulfillment for women and acknowledges the multifaceted nature of maternal experiences. The film prominently features three generations of women: the mother Sanaka, and the daughter-in-law Paromita. Each woman represents a distinct phase of life, allowing for a nuanced examination of female experiences across generations. The characters are multifaceted and complex, breaking away from stereotypical representations. They have agency, desires, and emotional depth, emphasizing the diversity of women's lives and challenging essentialist notions. The film highlights the struggles faced by women, including societal expectations, restricted autonomy, and the pressures of motherhood. It portrays the emotional and psychological toll these factors can have on women's lives. Thus

Sanaka did not want a divorce but silently maintained her friendship with Mani Biswas (played by Soumitra Chatterjee) and Parama did not want a divorce, and wanted to be in a relationship with Rahul but could not go further considering the social context of the time. However, these women of the next generation react to their circumstances unlike the older women: Paromita ends a meaningless marriage and starts a new life by marrying Rajiv Srivastava (played by Rajesh Sharma).

This film critically investigates through the lens of 'Male Gaze' theory, revealing complex dynamics involving gaze, narrative structure, and the portrayal of women on screen. Sen's directorial skill, combined with the film's visual aspects, pushes established cinematic boundaries, providing a sophisticated investigation of female subjectivity. Sen subverts the conventional objectification of women in cinema by creating a cinematic space for female subjectivity and agency. The film interrogates and analyses traditional gender norms through visual storytelling, providing a counter-narrative to the prevailing cinematic discourse. Sen's narrative choices, in destroying established power dynamics, fit with the feminist critique of traditional cinema. The cinematography painstakingly builds a visual language that emphasizes the female characters' interiority and complexity. Paromita's body is used

Bengali Cinema and the Body Politics of Representation:
Locating Agency in Aparna Sen's Films *Parama* and *Paromitar Ekdin*

to explore autonomy and resistance, defying cinematic traditions and altering the visual image of women. Sen's directorial choices and visual storytelling lift the film above and beyond a simple narrative, transforming it into a captivating piece that questions and reshapes standard cinematic paradigms.

In *Paramitar Ekdin*, Aparna Sen's fierce examination of gender and sexual politics, and her perspicacious negotiation of a women's autonomy of expression have a timeless, compelling resonance. Jayashree Dasgupta's song "Hridoy Aamar Prokash Holo" acts as a window to Khuku's (played by Sohini Sengupta) untrammelled humanity that awes everyone as she sings, stunning them into shame for inadequately understanding her. *Paramitar Ekdin* touches upon the intersections of class and gender, highlighting the disparities faced by women from different socioeconomic backgrounds. The film explores how these socioeconomic differences affect their experiences and opportunities, emphasizing the importance of recognizing the intersecting systems of oppression that shape women's lives. While the film portrays conflicts between Sanaka and Paromita, it also highlights moments of empathy, understanding, and solidarity between women. The characters find solace and support in their shared experiences of navigating societal expectations and patriarchal norms. This portrayal of female bonding serves as a powerful tool for empowerment, challenging the idea that women must be pitted against each other and instead advocating for collaboration and support. Through its exploration of these themes, *Paromitar Ekdin* offers a feminist critique of patriarchal structures, challenges traditional gender roles, and highlights the complexities of women's lives. Aparna Sen's direction, combined with nuanced performances, provides a thought-provoking narrative that engages with feminist film theory and raises questions about gender, power, agency, and solidarity.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, Aparna Sen's films *Parama* and *Paromitar Ekdin* are profound investigations of female agency and the body politics of representation in Bengali cinema. Films made by Aparna Sen demonstrates a feminist perspective, where women's bodies are not merely objects of the 'Male Gaze' but essential components of their identity and self-expression. By depicting female characters with their desires, dilemmas, and aspirations, she provides a counter-narrative to the conventional portrayal of women in mainstream cinema.

The representation of Body Politics in these films does not portray a homogeneous experience but acknowledges the diversity of women's lives and the intersects of their identities. Sen's characters come from different social backgrounds and age groups, allowing for a more inclusive exploration of agency and representation. Aparna Sen's films *Parama* and *Paromitar Ekdin* challenge the Body Politics of representation in Bengali cinema by foregrounding women's agency, their individuality, and their struggles against patriarchal norms. These films contribute to an ongoing dialogue on feminism, gender roles, and societal expectations, urging the audience to reflect on the importance of acknowledging women's agency in all its complexities. Through her powerful storytelling and nuanced

characterizations, Aparna Sen has carved a significant place for herself in the realm of Indian cinema, where her work continues to inspire and provoke discussions on gender and representation.

In the films of Aparna Sen, the nudity of women has not been shown purposefully, the need for drama has come naturally. The story of the financially indigent father's house is in the context of both Parama and Paromita. Parama's marriage took place in an aristocratic upper-class family and Paromita's lower-middle-class aristocratic house. On the other hand, *Parama*, and *Paromitar Ekdin* are women-centric films. The director was against the current trend of feminism in the society behind the institution called 'marriage'. Therefore, this film is considered one of the most controversial films in Bengali. As a very interesting and one of the best means of entertainment, the film can play an important role in shaping people's new ideas and attitudes. Films can also be a source of inspiration for creating bonds of unity and harmony over communal divisions and sectarian strife. Instead of violence and hatred, they can spread the message of cooperation, unity, tolerance, and harmony. Through its ethical-value-based educational stories, documentaries, etc., as a popular medium, the film can play the role of social educator by educating the masses against illiteracy, backwardness, and prejudice.

Aparna Sen's films are profoundly steeped in Bengali culture and society, serving as a critical lens through which to study gender dynamics. The film "Parama" criticises the superficiality and rigidity of upper-middle-class norms, emphasizing the emotional and psychological toll on women. *Paromitar Ekdin* takes a more close and personal look at familial ties and societal expectations on women. Sen's subtle storytelling and empathetic representation of complex female characters provide a strong critique of patriarchal norms. Her films challenge standard story lines and fight for more inclusive and powerful representations of women in film. Sen's *Parama* and *Paromitar Ekdin* are key works that make substantial contributions to the discussion of female agency and the body politics of representation in Bengali cinema. Sen's films foreground women's experiences while defying conventional gender stereotypes, paving the path for a more nuanced and powerful portrayal of women in Indian cinema. Her work not only aligns with contemporary feminist ideas, but it also serves as an important platform for redefining the possibilities of female identity and strength in a shifting socio-cultural milieu. Sen's films are much more than just personal transformation stories; they are also strong acts of cultural and societal resistance.

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