
SHACKLES OF PATRIARCHY: THROUGH THE FILMS OF APARNA SEN

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Abstract: The movies that are being dealt here are written and directed by the renowned Bengali filmmaker Aparna Sen. What we have seen till now from most of the films of Sen is her unconventional and primary approach to the issues of marriage, caste, religion through the lens of gender. The movies that we have chosen for our discussion related to the aforesaid issues are- *Parama* (1984), *36 Chowringhee Lane* (1981), *Mr and Mrs Iyer* (2002) and *Sati* (1989). In the case of all the four movies mentioned above, the institution of marriage is intrinsic in shaping the lives of the respective female protagonists. In the movie *Parama* marriage, despite its intrinsic nature of binding an Indian female to her family and society, acted as an avenue for the female protagonist to explore and eventually discover her individuality. In *36 Chowringhee Lane*, the life of the protagonist was affected by not being bound to the same institution. In the case of *Mr and Mrs Iyer* gender roles get reversed through an exchange of identity from the female to the male within an idea of marriage inextricably linked to the real issues of caste and religion. In the movie *Sati* the Bengali society is portrayed from a grass root level where marriage is considered to be the be all and end all of a girl's life so much so that the family of the protagonist didn't even hesitate to get her married with a non-human object like Banyan tree. But what is notable is that the practice of Sati or self-immolation of the wife in the pyre of the husband is very central to the thriving of Brahmanical Hinduism in early 19th century Bengal. Thus, caste and religion are fully entrenched in the concept of marriage.

Keywords: Brahmanical Patriarchy, Pativrata Dharma, Sati, Stridharma.

Introduction: Caste/class, religion and gender are seen to be intertwined in the works of Aparna Sen and her inclusive nature of thought is highlighted in the roles that the protagonists of the movies have played having different class, caste and religious affiliations. Sen's genius lies in the manner in which she is able to accommodate stories from different caste and religious background thereby analysing them through the lens of gender where the female protagonists express themselves in different social and political circumstances. The movies **36 Chowringhee Lane** (1981), **Parama**(1984), **Sati** (1989) and **Mr. and Mrs. Iyer** (2002) are some of the masterpieces of Sen and has dealt with the social issues that are at the heart of Indian society and politics.

The four movies have dealt with issues that are not very similar to each other. But marriage as an institution has been an important point of discussion throughout these films and its ramifications have been discerned differently in different situations. There are other important issues at hand which are noteworthy. For instance, communal riots, psychological state of a woman following the death of the husband, casteism, rural/urban dichotomy and so on are other issues that this paper will focus on. **Parama** and **Sati** have dealt with issues where marriage has become an indispensable factor that has shaped their lives both within and without. To be precise, how the customs and traditions that are framed by the Bengali society for a woman both implicitly and explicitly centers around the institution of marriage is what these two movies are grappling with. In **36 Chowringhee Lane** and **Mr. and Mrs. Iyer**, which have developed with slightly different subject matter, have equally gathered attention of the

modern audience. In **Mr. and Mrs. Iyer**, Sen uses the 2002 Gujarat riot and the 9/11 massacre as its backdrop. The kind of communal riots and tensions that is witnessed in the movie gives us a glimpse of the 'identity crisis' that has prevailed in India at that point of time. The communal riot between the Hindus and the Muslims in the film **Mr and Mrs Iyer**, a major turning point in the storyline is a product of religious nationalism. Romila Thapar (2016, n.p) in work differentiates between nationalism developed in the colonial period (ideology unifying the colonised that is, the Indians against the government) and the various 'sub nationalisms' (along the lines of religion, caste and community) that developed within this broader version of 'nationalism'. She states,

“The predominant form of nationalism, described as anti-colonial and secular, was beginning to be imprinted on Indian historical writing in the early 20th century. This was the nationalism of the majority of the Indian population. But parallel to this, and initially less apparent in historical writing, was emerging the two religious 'nationalisms'—Hindu and Muslim—much encouraged by the colonial version of the Indian past. These were not essentially anti-colonial, since their agenda lay in their political ambition of establishing separate religion-based nation-states. In other words, religion was the chief basis for creation of a new identity for people possessing shared history, ideas and aims through the creation of 'others'.”

However, the films are being analyzed from a feminist perspective therefore the intermingling of gender with nationalism must be discussed and addressed. Davis (2003, pp. 9-36) distinctly argues in the context of the relationship between gender and nation that “in a 'culturalised discourse' where 'culture' has come to play a central role in both analyses and ideologies of national and other collectivities, gendered bodies and sexuality play pivotal roles as territories, markers and reproducers of the narratives of nations and other collectivities. Gender relations are at the heart of cultural constructions of social identities and collectivities as well as in most cultural conflicts and contestations”. She states that in this gendered structure of nation, women are constructed as the symbolic bearers of collectivity's identity and honor, both personally and collectively whereas men are perceived as the 'active agents' of the nation who have to directly contribute to the 'development' of the nation. The former notion is portrayed in the appearance of Meenakshi Iyer in **Mr. and Mrs. Iyer**. 'Nation' and 'gender' are the social constructs. As Sikata Banerjee (2003, p.167) states, “the political doctrine of nationalism is based on the idea of a nation or people, and it usually locates an 'other' who is used to reinforce ties uniting the nation. In other words, a coherent community exists because “we” are ethnically, linguistically, religiously and or/ideologically distinct from “them”. Gender refers to a group of culturally endorsed traits- aggression, strength, weakness- that is deemed necessary for socially acceptable 'masculine' and 'feminine' behavior”. The crystallization of these socially constructed categories of nation i.e. in the form of Hindu nation and gender is explicitly manifested in **Mr. and Mrs. Iyer** where the communal riot is a product of the ideology of masculinized Hindu nationalism, as described by Sikata Banerjee with its central features being militancy, aggressiveness and a willingness to engage in a battle against the 'others' (the Muslims) exacerbating into a riot.

The construction of a Hindu nation with its loyalty towards maintaining the supremacy of Hinduism over the others must simultaneously steer its loyalty towards the features that hold it upright. One of the important tools is the caste system with its innate notion of purity and pollution, with the primacy of the Brahmins (the highest cast) over the 'Others'- Shudras (the lower caste) or the Dalits (the contemporary nomenclature attached to the members of the lower caste). It is evident that a proper functioning of the caste system chiefly contributes to the stronghold of Hinduism that strengthens and assists in materializing the idea of a 'Hindu Nation'. Now, one of the primary manners of maintaining the 'sanctity' of a Hinduised caste system is through exemption of any form of contact with the low caste members and the Muslims by the Brahmins. Another way is by maintaining the 'sacred' relationship between 'gender' and 'caste' conceptualized in the notion of Brahmanical Patriarchy clearly defined by Uma Chakravarti. In the relationship between gender and caste, as Chakravarti (2009, pp. 1-79) states, the higher the caste of a woman, the lower are the opportunities for her to mingle or engage in marital unions with the 'others'. This practice is severely condemned in a caste centered Hindu nation though

not deemed illegal in contemporary India. The relations between gender and nation; nation and religion; caste and gender; religion and caste are well illustrated and addressed in the films by Aparna Sen.

The banality of solely equating the dominance of men in the social, economic and political arena to a concept as broad as patriarchy could be avoided by subsuming the twin concepts of patrilineality and patrilocality under it. The latter (movement of a woman to the house of a man in the aftermath of her marriage) functions as an edifice upon which the pillar of marriage thrives. Sen's approach to the quintessential issues of patrilocality and marriage, atypical to a caste centric Indian society at the onset of her film **Mr. and Mrs. Iyer** sets the course of the rest of the storyline. This is reflected in Meenakshi Iyer's (played by Konkona Sen) outward appearance where her conformation with reference to donning saree, bindi, vermilion confirms her status as an obedient wife, a dutiful homemaker and also fulfils the 'proper' symbolic representation of a married Hindu woman. Caste and gender intertwine and get encapsulated in her role as a traditional Tamil Brahmin housewife where she meets the criteria of fulfilling the expectations of a high caste woman with regard to her marriage duties, motherhood, repressed sexuality and caste duties that had been expected and demanded of her by her immediate family and caste. This is reflected in her refusal to be merely touched on the shoulder by her Muslim companion Jehangir Chowdhury (played by Rahul Bose), expression of guilt at having accepted water from him following the discovery of his identity (a Muslim) and abstaining from the consumption of non-vegetarian food due to her 'superior' caste status. In this context, her compliance with 'Brahmanical Patriarchy' needs to be elaborated in detail. Uma Chakravarti (2009, pp. 34-35) defines Brahmanical patriarchy as,

“A set of rules and institutions in which caste and gender are linked, each shaping the other and where women are crucial in maintaining the boundaries between castes. It incorporates both an ideology of chaste wives and pativrata women who are valorised, and a structure of rules and institutions by which caste hierarchy and gender inequality are maintained through both the production of consent and the application of coercion. Since, Brahmanical patriarchy is structurally integrated into the caste system the distinctive cultural codes for upper and lower caste women in terms of marriage and sexuality are also closely linked to the appropriation of the labour of the lower castes by the upper caste. This explains ban on remarriage of upper caste women at one end, and, sometimes the enforced cohabitation of the lower caste women at the other.”

Her conformity with the above mentioned Brahmanical Patriarchy stands in contrast to the portrayal of Jehangir Chowdhury (played by Rahul Bose) commonly referred to as Raja by his friends that led to the confusion of his religious identity (of a Muslim), an independent and a free-spirited wildlife photographer with a comparatively independent and unprejudiced approach to life and his immediate surroundings. The interplay of religion, caste and gender is integral to the development of the plotline throughout the film. Religion is instrumental in shaping the relationship between the two protagonists of the film where the event that acted as a catalyst (communal riot between the Muslims and the Hindus) in bringing about a transformation in their relationship as well as their manner of interaction was bigoted, orthodox, patriarchal and reflective of unequivocal adherence towards the respective religious tenets or beliefs. Here, it must be noted that maintenance of caste duties is central to the institutionalisation of Hinduism, exemption from which would herald anarchy. Within the ambit of this expected orthodoxy where Meenakshi was expected to be obedient to her religion as well as caste, she challenges the norms of the society through an exchange of identity that is, by providing an identity to Jehangir as her husband Mr Iyer. It symbolises a union- a marriage, not consented by the society, never seen by the immediate members of her surrounding, without any rituals and without any intervention by the government. The anarchy caused by the exacerbation of communal tension entailed the chaos of an ensuing interaction between a high caste Hindu woman and a Muslim man, who in this film is at the receiving end of the wrath and abhorrence of the fundamentalist ideologies with regard to his religion. Thus, the idea of marriage between Meenakshi and Jehangir was a product of the real issues of religion and caste. The portrayal of the idea of their marital union was reified in the minds of the viewers in

various instances like, the narration of their honeymoon incidents by Jehangir while quoting real experiences from his life as a photographer and labelling him with the name of Subramaniam Iyer by Meenakshi (her real husband) to avoid confusion while cramming the listeners with the true stories of their first meeting. Sen represents the expression of individuality by Meenakshi within the broader patriarchal framework of marriage that is discerned in her seeking protection in the company of a man while jointly residing at a forest house as Mr and Mrs Iyer, an identity created by her to protect Jehangir from a much broader issue of communalism. This is rather a much more realistic portrayal of a tradition oriented Iyer woman bound to the shackles of patrilocality and patriarchy in general. But it must be noted that her ability in transcending the issues of caste, religious and gender identity is capacitated by the incident where she forgets all the norms of her caste and community thereby developing an intimacy with the photographer who is supposedly Muslim while in the next moment breaking away from it is indicated by the halting of the train at her destination and her eventual reunion with her husband that symbolised her reunion with the societal expectations.

The influence of 'Brahmanical patriarchy' is also felt in the movie **Parama** at the beginning where the female protagonist, Parama has to conform to and abide by the prescribed rules that are framed for an upper caste woman. It seems Parama being the daughter-in-law has shouldered the burden of maintaining the status of her husband's family which is supposedly stained by her act. The constant censuring and humiliation that Parama has to go through is a part of the whole system which tries to curb the freedom of women through various taboos that has been generated and regulated by the society since time immemorial. The concept of *stridharma/pativrata dharma* is a rhetorical device to ensure the social control of women through maintenance of their chastity. (Chakravarti, 2013, p. 20) At the initial stage, we see Parama fulfilling the responsibilities and her constant endeavors to live up to the notion of an ideal womanhood set up by the ideologues. Parama, like many other women, did internalize those ideas of purity and chastity but the biggest breakthrough in her life came when she defiantly justified her act in front of her family members.

In the case of **Parama** it is also seen that the institution of marriage which is very much structured or loaded with the principles of Brahmanical patriarchy has been one of the causes of Parama's subjectivity in her husband's family. Parama initially is portrayed in a way in which being from a modest Bengali lower middle-class household she is bounded by the roles of a mother, a wife and a daughter-in-law of her husband's family who, it is apparent from the movie, were monetarily better-off as compared to Parama's natal family. She is busy in fulfilling the expectations of the different family members who are related to her, be it her children, her husband or her mother-in-law and the relatives. Even after being an ace in playing Sitar she had to completely side-line her own interests for the sake of her family members. She is answerable to her husband and in-laws for whatever she does in her private life. Aparna Sen's genius emerges where she has tried to show how marriage as an institution gives Parama gives her an incentive to explore her long-lost sense of beauty and sexuality. Sen uses the photographer, Rahul as a catalyst that has erupted the hidden desires of Parama where she yearns to be independent thereby rediscovering her individuality.

The traditional definition of marriage that is propounded by scholars like Kathleen Gough (1959, p.23) is- it is a union between a man and a woman and it establishes the legitimacy of children. If such is the case, the customs and practices that come as additional baggage and are so embedded within the whole structure of the marital union, should not even count. The definition propounded by Gough can be problematized in the sense that marriage as an institution cannot be a determining factor for a man and a woman to be legitimately united in a society where most of the rituals and customs are framed keeping in mind the patriarchal ethos of the society. Women in most of the cases have to leave their natal families in order to get settled in their husband's family and this system has prevailed in most of the societies of India and the Bengalis are no exception to this. In many cases it is seen that women have to curtail their liberty, self-worth, aspirations in order to acclimatize with the ethics and structure of the husband's family. Historically, matrimony is not grounded in love or intimacy but it is a strategic alliance between two families that is orchestrated by the families to ensure long term stability and prosperity of as many people as it is possible. (Zielinski, 2015, n.p)

Rahul comes to India on an assignment of getting some pictures of a quintessentially Bengali beauty. The lady who will be photographed should be a 'house-wife' so to speak for which Rahul finds Parama to be the perfect match of his expectations. Here the idea of Rahul is to project Parama, who is 'married' woman in a way that stands in contrast to the poised, decent and polished Bengali woman who is ridden with the virtues of fitting into the upper caste patriarchal family structure. The idea of nudity or sensuality is very much alien to the so-called virtues of a married Indian woman, an idea that is romanticised by the foreign-returned photography, Rahul. On the other hand, having met Rahul, who was much younger to her in age, Parama realizes the banality of these marital liaisons in her life. She finds a way to transcend the vicious structure of these marital relations in which her own subordination is grounded. The photographs that were clicked and published by Rahul in a magazine although were too blasphemous for her family to be accepted. But the pictures indirectly channelized Parama to think about herself differently, as a woman of self-worth and esteem, who strives to have an identity of her own. She constantly tries to recall the name of the plant which she used to have in her natal house, that very plant which was a part of her childhood memories which she cherished for a very long period of time. Only after meeting Rahul and also at same time being betrayed by him she recognizes the long-lost independent woman who dwelt inside her, just as she used to be in her childhood days as an unmarried and a free lady. Therefore, throughout the movie we can see that there is a tension around the institution of 'marriage', a clash between the pre-marital and post-marital expectations of Parama. But Parama has done a justice towards herself by trying to identify her freedom to think and work for herself as an independent woman, away from the shackles of the familial bindings.

Parama and **Mr. and Mrs Iyer** are movies that are largely set in an urban setting although, but in different situations and time-frame. The status of Parama in her family is not very different from a woman who is devoid of education or never had the privilege to interact with the so-called 'educated' lots of the society. This attests to the fact that education cannot be a liberating force in order to shun the stereotypical attitude and taboos that are attached to women. For instance, **Sati** as a movie grapples with the same idea of marriage where a woman is devoured by the patriarchal tendencies of the society, which essentially is a trait of the fourfold caste structure of the Hindu society. Women's access to education in the society that is shown in the story of **Sati** is far-fetched. In the case of Meenakshi Iyer also we see a similar sort of conformist attitude where her unquestioned loyalty towards her husband's family, bindi, vermilion are markers of her caste-centric demeanor that has controlled the mobility and visibility of the Hindu upper caste women to a much greater extent. Moreover, the way Meenakshi Iyer is disgusted with drinking water from Jehangir Chowdhury's hands after the discovery of his religious identity of being a Muslim, is a clear indicator of the anxiety that is integral to the Hindu caste hierarchy.

Sati that is set in a very different setting portraying a girl named Uma from a rural area of West Bengal too has to face tribulations for having a devastating horoscope which said that she will become a Sati after marriage since her husband will die soon after their marriage. The story highlights that the family to which Uma belonged is an upper caste Hindu-Bengali household. The movie begins with a story where it is shown that the practice of Sati is hailed by the rural folks. The lady who is repeatedly hailed as 'Sati Maa' is revered for her act of immolating herself at the pyre of her husband, is in a way appreciated for her 'great deed' of self-sacrifice. Now, the idea of Sati is mostly seen to be a voluntary and selfless act of women in various parts of India including West Bengal without even trying to know whether a woman is taking such a step out of her own wishes or is it merely because of the societal pressures and expectations that she is over-burdened with. The inherent anxiety is that the sexuality of a single woman or a widow is a threat to the society since she might lead other men astray by making them to get involved in promiscuous liaisons that bring a bad name to her family and kins. As Manu quotes that the nature of women will drive women into seeking satisfaction anywhere, any time and with anyone. "Women do not care for beauty, nor is their attention fixed on age; thinking it is enough that he is a man, they give themselves to the handsome and to the ugly". (Cited from Chakravarti, 2013, p.15)

The practice of Sati was abolished in 1829 but the movie has tried to reflect the society of 1828 Bengal where the practice was in vogue. Whether Sati is a voluntary act or a practice undertaken by the widows of 19th century Bengal is elaborated by Sangari & Vaid (1981) in their work titled 'Sati in Modern India: A Report'. They are of the opinion that Bengal is one of the first states that has brought out reforms for abolishing the practice of Sati. But how far it has been implemented in the then Bengali society is a matter of concern since the case study that has been brought out by Sangari & Vaid gives us an account of the Sati practice in a much later north Indian society like Rajasthan i.e. around 1980s. They have tried to bring out a case study of a village, viz. Jhadli. A lady named Om Kanwar of 16 years of age decided to commit Sati due to the sudden death of her husband after 6 months of their marriage Sangari & Vaid have come up with the conclusion that "Om Kanwar's probable motivation for committing Sati came from the acute emotional tension she had to undergo as a result of the death of her husband. She underwent a hysterical fit ten days earlier and also she could gauge the hardships of a widow's life visible to her having seen the aunt of the family, the precepts of *naridharma* given to her by the family guru and the strain of the family discord due to its straightened circumstances". The low status of women, more essentially the upper caste widows has a clear bearing on the incidence of Sati. (Sangari & Vaid, 1981, p.1286) This statement holds much water when we see a similar sort of a scenario where the lady, Uma belonged to an upper caste Bengali household and is stricken by the anxiety of being a Sati. Moreover, the kind of notions that was prevalent in the society at that time was that the women who are possessed by *Sat* is considered of gaining meritorious superhuman characteristics. This idea of *Sat* transforms or elevates the death of the widow as a supremely holy act from a ritualized murder or a suicide that is witnessed publicly.

The second issue that is highlighted in the movie is marriage as an institution is intrinsic to the life of a woman so much so that the family of the female protagonist, Uma does not even hesitate to marry her with a non-human object like a Banyan tree since it is too risky to get her married with a man who is forecasted to have died had she married him. She is rejected by most of the men because she is mute by birth and also is born with a horrendous horoscope. The thought that marriage shapes the life of a woman is one of the ideas that are being picturized in this movie. In a society of the kind that is portrayed in the movie marriage becomes a tool that can define the status and identity of a woman. A study brought out by the Indian government's National Family Health Survey in 2009 highlights that 47 percent of Indian women are married by the age of 18. (Roy, 2012, n.p). Therefore, the scenario portrayed in the movie may not be an over statement or is not exaggeration of facts of history. An account of Haimabati Sen penned down by Indrani Sen (2012) elucidates the kind of sufferings women of Bengal had to face in the time period around 19th century. Haimabati Sen was faced with widowhood when she was a minor. She was married to a middle aged (45 years) man and had to go through his lecherous attitude while he was explicitly involved in sexual liaisons with other women even after his marriage with the young girl, Haimabati. She as a minor barely had the courage or experience to speak in protest against her husband's acts. Finally, even after he died Haimabati had to face societal betrayal where she had to lead a life of isolation being an upper caste Kulin widow. In the account of Indrani Sen (2012) although we find that Haimabati by dint of her zeal for education finally constructed an avenue for herself thereby establishing herself as a doctor at that point in time when educated women did not receive any acknowledgement from the society as the men did. Yet the journey of her life that is being recorded in the article shows the pathetic plight of women in the then Bengal. (Sen, 2012, pp.53-62)

The common factor that can be seen in both the movies is that they are set in an upper caste Bengali background where there is a constant pressure posed on the female protagonists in order to maintain their purity, to control their sexuality and so forth. Sati as a practice is mostly seen to have been practiced among the upper castes (Mani, 1986, p. 32) and is one such tool used to ensure such prohibitions and restrictions for women. But the distinct features that separate these two movies is that Parama is a woman belonging to a wealthy, literate urban household and therefore gets the avenue/agency to rediscover herself despite of facing myriads of tormentous comments on her character after developing an extramarital affair with Rahul. Whereas, Uma did not have any way to escape her fate of getting married to the Banyan tree. Her inability to speak became another handicap for her since she can neither express her opinions nor can she resist the decisions of her family members.

Parama is considered to be the ‘most-feminist’ movie that Sen has ever made but the stories which she has recorded of her female protagonists in the two movies, **Parama** and **Sati** in some way highlights some commonality in the kind of censoring that women have to go through in the society in different periods of time in different contexts and at different levels. Similarly, in **Mr. and Mrs. Iyer**, Meenakshi Iyer being an educated woman who could understand the complications of communal tension, emerges as a strong character where some sort of role reversal is seen between Jahangir Chowdhury (Raju) and Meenakshi Iyer. The latter protects the former from being a victim of the ongoing communal riot, a diversion from the idea of men as protectors and female as victims.

36 Chowringhee Lane, set in the post Independent India, paints a vivid picture of the implicitness of patriarchy in the concept of marriage couched in ‘companionship’ where the portrayal of the chief protagonist of the film Violet Stoneham (played by Jennifer Kendal) is intrinsic to her inability in having acquired a companion (after the death of her first husband) and her detachment from the institution of marriage, despite possessing a rigid professional identity. Her solitude stands in contrast to the vivacity of her ex-student Nandita Roy in the presence of her partner Samaresh (played by Dhritiman Chatterjee) with whom she was romantically and sexually involved. Here, Sen very subtly addresses the issue of race. The backdrop of the film being post-independence India picturizes the mental state of an Anglo-Indian woman who stands aloof not being able to identify to the cultural matrix of the post-independence Calcutta.

In the film, Sen in addition to emphasising on the absence of a marital partner also attempts to bring into focus the inability of an older woman in acquiring the same. The relationship between marriage and companionship is relevant here as the film shows that the permanence of the latter could only be achieved by the attainment of the former. This could be perceived in the pre-marital relationship between Nandita Roy (played by Debashree Roy) and Samaresh Moitra (played by Dhritiman Chatterjee) that culminated in their marriage, a major twist in the storyline that further aggravated and underlined Violet’s loneliness. The utmost importance attached to earning by a male member in a patriarchal society is also stressed in the film that is reflected in the change of an attitude towards Samaresh by the parents of Nandita through giving them a house to reside, following the confirmation of his professional settlement. Post marital union also earned them more societal approval that is seen in the presence of their larger ‘friend groups’ and more avenues for socialisation. In the film, Violet’s professional/monetary independence was not emphasised on having a positive impact on her life, rather it was taken advantage of and even her interest in narrating quotes from the plays of Shakespeare was embedded in melancholia and in the film it was surrounded by varied forms of betrayals ranging from the lack of attention by her students to her ultimate betrayal of having excluded from getting an invitation to a Christmas party. Her yearning for companionship stands in sharp contrast to accessibility of Nandita to the same that, in her case could only be achieved through the fulfilment of the societal expectations of marriage.

Conclusion: As a conclusion it will be judicious to say that our attempt in this paper is not to give an idea that tries to alienate patriarchy as an add-one to the sociological issues of caste, class and race. Patriarchy is a shadow that looms large in all these bigger issues facing the society and cannot be placed in isolation. It has made its way into the complex matrix of caste, class and race with its own underpinnings which in the present scenario has become inseparable. The difference in the subject matter of the four films, directed by the same filmmaker must be emphasised. The chief question that could be raised at this point following the elaborate and academic analysis of her works is- what is the broader theme within which her films could be ‘accurately’ placed in this huge puzzle designed by the ideological motley of social issues? The question could be answered by moving beyond the aforementioned issues of caste, religion, communal nationalism and its role in shaping the relationship between various individuals. Rather, the emphasis must be placed on the manner in which the various issues have an over-arching umbrella of ‘patriarchy’ that is spread out throughout the story line of the films within and without. In case of Mr and Mrs Iyer, Sen shows the complex concoction of caste and religious tension (as discussed above) with patriarchy in the manner in which an impending sexual

relation that might develop between a high caste Hindu woman and a Muslim man as a result of their interaction (a major fear of a caste oriented Hindu nation). In *36 Chowringhee Lane*, the issue of race mingles with patriarchy that manifests in the subordination of a British woman with regard to her marital status to her Indian counterpart (and not the other way round) in post Independence India and relying on the latter for comfort leading to her eventual abandonment. In *Paroma*, the adultery in the form of post marital sexual relation committed on the part of a married woman contributes to the fear of patriarchy that in the film is shaped by patrilocality and the notion of *pativrata* dharma, as mentioned above. In *Sati*, patriarchy is shaped by the early 19th century practice of Sati or widow-immolation that confirms the 'sanctity' of widowhood and any breach in the performance of this act adds to its fear. Marriage, in these films plays a pivotal role in affecting the lives of the women and in defining their relationship with men and the society.

Also, an extremely broad and complex concept of patriarchy which has featured in the films only justifies the fact that the roots and shoots of patriarchy is well spread-out within the systemic structures of caste, class, race and cannot be put or placed differently.

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