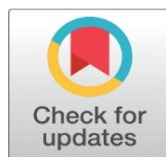


FEMINIST MESSAGES IN RITUPARNO GHOSH'S FILMS 'CHOKHERBALI' AND 'BAARIWALI': A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF FEMALE DESIRES

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Received 07 February 2024

Accepted 28 June 2024

Published 30 June 2024

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DOI

[10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i1.2024.959](https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i1.2024.959)

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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ABSTRACT

Films are the reflection of the socio-psychological phenomenon of our society. Cinema is an influential medium that resonates with the culture, attitude, human thought process, and temperament of people in our society, especially in the context of Women. Females are often projected in a very stereotypical way in films. Indian mainstream films hardly explore women's psyche. The female characters mostly dwell in a minor part around the lead male actors/protagonists. The social, cultural, and economic conditions of middle-class Bengali families have a notable effect on Rituparno's works. He adapted Tagore's novel *Chokherbali* and described the character Binodini in his version. He depicted the unique equation between two female characters 'Binodini' and 'Ashalata' and their affinity towards the same man. He enlightened the impenitent sensual desire of a widow (Binodini) and her ego. The film, *Chokherbali* (A Grain of Sand) is a story of the love, desire, and loneliness of women. "Bariwali," also known as "The Lady of the House," is a Bengali film released in 2000. The story of a lonely, wealthy woman named Banalata, played by Kirron Kher, who becomes emotionally attached to a young filmmaker who comes to shoot a documentary at her mansion. The film explores themes of loneliness, desire, and the complexities of human relationships. Rituparno Ghosh was known for his sensitive storytelling and exploration of human emotions, and "Bariwali" is no exception. G.D. Anderson once quoted, "Feminism isn't about making women strong, women are already strong. It's about changing the way the world perceives that strength. Source." The same in the case of Rituparno Ghosh as an auteur who wrote his female characters very diligently and portrayed them on screen [Muneer \(2022\)](#). This is qualitative research and it critically analysed the storyline of the film 'Chokher Bali' and 'Bariwali' directed by Rituparno Ghosh. The study focussed on the female desire auteur theory and framing theory and it finds out the motivation behind his female desires, motivation and agony. The research paper deals with women's issues, desires, and struggles for their existence in the contemporary socio-cultural context by analysing the frames and narratives.

Keywords: Feminist Messages, Rituparno Ghosh, Womanhood, Gender, Female Admiration, Female Desire, Chokherbali and Bariwali

1. INTRODUCTION

Chokherbali: Unveiling Shadows is a cinematic journey that resonates with the contemporary audience, addressing issues that continue to plague women in their pursuit of equality and freedom. As the credits roll, the film stands as a testament to the enduring spirit of women who navigate a world where desires, struggles, and the quest for identity remain timeless [Roy \(2013\)](#), [Cîrlig \(2022\)](#). In the bustling cityscape of contemporary India, where tradition clashes with modernity, *Chokher Bali* unfolds as a poignant narrative, weaving through the intricate fabric of women's issues, desires, and relentless struggles for existence in a socio-cultural context film

begins by introducing Binodini, a young and educated widow who challenges societal norms that confine women to a mournful and colourless life [Dasgupta & Banerjee \(2016\)](#). In this modern adaptation, Binodini emerges as a symbol of resilience, breaking free from the shackles of tradition that once bound her. The story transcends time, offering a fresh perspective on the struggles that women continue to face in their quest for autonomy [Hoque \(2019\)](#). As the plot unfolds, we delve into the complexities of Binodini's character, portrayed not as an idealized woman but as a human with shades of grey and tangible flaws. Her education becomes a powerful weapon, enabling her to navigate a world that often looks down upon widows. The film underscores the enduring relevance of education as a means of empowerment for women, mirroring the contemporary challenges faced by many in accessing education globally. Asha, an innocent and orphaned young woman, symbolizes the vulnerability of those who lack education. The film showcases her journey from dependence on male figures in her life to a realization of her own identity through education. In a world where power dynamics are shaped by educational imbalances, Asha's story becomes a piteous commentary on the transformative potential of learning [Omnishayan \(2017\)](#).

The central theme of love and morality takes centre stage as Binodini's jealousy of Asha magnifies, leading to a web of intricate relationships. The psychological interplay between characters, especially Binodini and Mahin, explores the complexities of human nature, emphasizing the importance of understanding beyond societal norms [Kundu & Kundu \(2023\)](#).

While the narrative remains faithful to Tagore's exploration of desires and the human psyche, the film introduces a contemporary twist. Binodini's desires and struggles are portrayed against the backdrop of a society that still grapples with gender inequality and restrictive norms. The climax of the film confronts the audience with a choice that challenges societal expectations. In a departure from Tagore's original ending, the film takes a bold step, advocating for the freedom of choice and breaking away from regressive traditions. Binodini and Bihari, despite societal constraints, choose love over conformity, leaving a lasting impact on the audience [Abhinandan Bera. \(2022\)](#).

Baariwali: In the quiet suburbs on the outskirts of Kolkata, the film *Baariwali* unfurls its narrative, delving into the life of Banalata (Kiron Kher), the last surviving member of an aristocratic family caught in the throes of a fading feudal order. Her mundane existence includes watching TV, taking care of her domestic assistance, an aged man-servant named Prasanna and an overtly sociable maid named Malati. When a film production company shows up looking for permission to use Banalata's property for a historical play, her life takes an unexpected turn. These outsiders, notably the charming director Dipankar and the stunning actress Sudeshna give Banalata's dull life a twist. Even though Banalata is aware of Dipankar's troubled history, she is nonetheless drawn to his charismatic persona and eventually agrees to have a tiny part in the movie. However, once the film crew departs, Banalata is left grappling with the emptiness of her solitary life, compounded by the betrayal of her overlooked film appearance.

Bariwali explores the juxtaposition of class divides, vividly portraying Banalata as a symbol of a fading aristocracy facing vulnerability in the wake of societal changes. The film crew's exploitation of Banalata's property and possessions underscores the decay of the feudal order, contrasting sharply with the street-smart understanding of the world exhibited by Malati. The narrative skilfully weaves in the influence of Rabindranath Tagore, particularly drawing parallels with Tagore's novel *Chokher Bali*. Banalata's reading of the novel to her maid Malati becomes a

pivotal moment, revealing the deep-seated frustration within Banalata's mind. The film intelligently integrates literary elements, emphasizing the continuity of societal issues across different timeframes [Bhattacharya \(2018\)](#).

Class and gender dynamics play a crucial role in the film's exploration of exploitation. Banalata's vulnerability extends beyond the creative exploitation by Dipankar; it encompasses other forms of exploitation revealed as the story unfolds. The movie emphasizes the subtle but significant effects of emotional manipulation on Banalata and Sudeshna, therefore drawing attention to the larger issue of everyone's susceptibility to the predatory tendencies of the creative type. Class conflicts, gender roles, and abusive partnerships come together towards the conclusion of the movie to paint a poignant picture of today's issues. The final scene, focusing on Banalata's empty bed and receding silhouette, transforms loneliness into a palpable object, leaving the audience with a profound reflection on the enduring complexities of women's issues, desires, and struggles in the contemporary socio-cultural context. *Baariwali* stands as a cinematic exploration of the human condition, unravelling the layers of vulnerability and exploitation that persist beneath the veneer of societal norms.

2. OBJECTIVES

- 1) To recognize the feminist themes, feelings, and goals embodied by Rituparno Ghosh's female leads in his films.
- 2) To examine the development of the female leads through an analysis of Ghosh's film frames, narratives, and storylines.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research aims to explore the intersection of Auteur Theory and Framing Theory in film analysis. Auteur Theory will be used to examine the unique stylistic and thematic contributions of a director, while Framing Theory will be employed to understand how these elements influence audience perception and interpretation. Framing theory will be utilized to comprehend how these components affect audience perception and interpretation, while auteur theory will be used to investigate the distinctive stylistic and thematic contributions of a director. Films director Rituparno Ghosh chosen as auteur that are widely recognized for their distinctive style and have received significant critical attention. Examination of specific scenes to identify framing techniques such as camera angles, shot composition, editing choices, and mise-en-scène. This methodology provides a structured approach to analyzing the interplay between auteur characteristics and framing in film. By combining Auteur Theory and Framing Theory, the research aims to offer a deeper understanding of how a director's unique vision shapes audience perception and interpretation and a feministic auteur. [Framing Theory. \(2014\)](#)

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

4.1. THE AUTEUR THEORY

Auteur theory, a fundamental concept in film criticism, positions the director as the central creative authority responsible for imparting a distinctive and personalized quality to a motion picture. Originating with the French New Wave critic Francois Truffaut in 1954, this theory contends that directors, much like authors, infuse their unique artistic vision into every aspect of a film, transcending the boundaries of the script. The essence of auteurism lies in the director's ability to

transform a film into a personal and expressive work, going beyond the mere execution of a screenplay [Dasgupta & Banerjee \(2016\)](#). This notion gained traction as French critics, particularly enamoured with American filmmakers such as Alfred Hitchcock, admired directors who elevated genre movies into compelling narratives with nuanced characters.

Despite its influence, auteur theory has not been without its detractors. Critics, including the likes of Pauline Kael, pointed out incongruities and argued against the theory's tendency to oversimplify the intricate collaborative nature of filmmaking. They contended that auteurism neglected the substantial contributions of producers, writers, and studios in shaping a film's identity. Nonetheless, auteur theory played a pivotal role in reshaping the film industry. As studios began ceding more creative control to directors, auteurism evolved to define directors by the nature of their expression rather than their ability to overcome external constraints. This shift in perspective contributed significantly to altering industry dynamics, empowering directors with greater creative autonomy. In summation, auteur theory underscores the director's paramount role in the filmmaking process, emphasizing their ability to imprint a film with a unique artistic signature. While facing criticisms for its simplifications, auteurism has indelibly influenced the film landscape, contributing to the elevation of directors as central figures in the creative realm.

4.2. FRAMING THEORY

Framing theory delves into how information is presented to the audience, extending beyond mere agenda-setting by focusing on the essence of the issues rather than specific topics. It posits that the media not only directs attention to particular events but also places them within a context of meaning, wielding influence over audience perceptions. Essentially, framing explores how the presentation or "frame" of information shapes people's choices in processing it. Erving Goffman initially introduced this theory as Frame Analysis, contending that individuals interpret the world through primary frameworks—natural and social. Natural frameworks view events as literal, physical occurrences without attributing social forces, while social frameworks consider events as socially driven, shaped by human whims, goals, and manipulations. These frameworks significantly influence how data is interpreted and communicated in a broader social context, with Goffman assuming individuals, whether consciously aware or not, adeptly use these frameworks in daily life [Ladopoulos & Dimitriadis \(2022\)](#).

Framing techniques, as proposed by Fairhurst and Sarr, encompass various strategies like metaphors, stories, tradition, slogans, artifacts, contrast, and spin. These techniques are employed by communicators to shape and emphasize specific aspects of information, making it more memorable and relatable [Omnishayan \(2017\)](#). Inextricably linked to Agenda Setting theory, framing goes beyond directing attention; it involves the conscious choices made by journalists, defining and constructing information in a way that frames how it is perceived by the audience. Ultimately, framing is an inherent and inescapable aspect of human communication, as individuals bring their frames to the interpretation and expression of information [Bhattacharya \(2018\)](#).

4.3. DECODING THE FEMINIST MESSAGES IN THE FILM 'CHOKHERBALI' USING THE AUTEUR THEORY

Rabindranath Tagore's work *Chokher Bali*, which has been adapted, takes place in 1902–1905, amid a backdrop of colonialism. The story follows the young widow Binodini as she negotiates social expectations, forbidden passions, and a complicated web of love. When a widow and her family adopt Binodini, her identity as a learned, intelligent lady becomes trapped in the constraints of widowhood. Social roles and the absence of approved venues for feminine expression are recurring themes. The contrast between Ashalata's lack of education and Binodini's complex persona emphasizes the struggle against stereotypes. The opera glasses used in the film, which is told from Binodini's point of view, highlight her voyeuristic perspective. Ghosh turns the camera so that viewers can interact with Binodini's defiance of social conventions through her eyes. The film portrays Binodini's struggle via the 'female' lens, capturing her frustrations and desires. Unlike the way women are objectified in commercial cinema, Ghosh gives Binodini more agency in her role as voyeur, drawing the audience into her struggle. The story, which is reminiscent of Ray's *Charulata*, addresses the constraints placed on women by society and highlights Binodini's viewpoint as she negotiates love, passion, and social expectations.

Upon meeting Binodini, she appears to be appropriately attired for a widow: a modest white cotton sari, a widow's rosary for jewellery, and her hair drawn back showing reverence. The sharp contrast with Ashalata, the newlywed bride dressed in a beautiful red and gold silk sari, emblematic of fertility, emphasizes this striking picture of her socioeconomic station. Ashalata has elaborately groomed hair, is adorned in jewels, and has cosmetics applied to accentuate her beauty. In the Butlerian sense of social regulating norms, When Mahendra's mother is there, Binodini keeps a low profile and watches them through the veil, or what we say 'Pallu'. The way that Binodini is portrayed changes as the movie goes on. Binodini is observed trying on jewellery at a private moment with Ashalata. This is not allowed for widows because it implies marriage. Unbeknownst to her, Binodini violates this taboo by decorating herself. When Mahendra and Behari find her decked up in Ashalata's marriage jewellery, it makes for an unpleasant encounter. By blurring the lines between young femininity and marriage (represented by the jewellery) and sterile widowhood (represented by the white sari), this act subverts socially prescribed norms. Through subverting social standards and expressing frustration with the limitations of her widowhood, Binodini's appearance is used as a canvas for her real-life experiences. In each of the segment the director as an auteur proves his point of view and perception of feminist messages [Dasgupta & Banerjee \(2016\)](#).

Again, Binodini's rebellion is on display when she goes to see Behari dressed in her widow's sari but with jewels hidden away, acting as a seductress trying to entice her partner ([Ghosh, Personal Interview, 2023](#)). Behari shuts the door behind her, revealing herself as she moves beyond the boundaries of social identification with the purposeful use of jewellery and clothes [Kundu & Kundu \(2023\)](#). In one scene, Binodini declares that she possesses three identities - that of a young woman, an educated woman, and a widow - yet all these have overshadowed her true self, articulating the complexity of her identity. I am both blood and flesh. Binodini challenges the stereotypical image of being a woman by embodying passion, a longing for life, and a yearning for family and motherhood while being a widow. In Ghosh's film, Binodini accepts asceticism—the social norm for widows—in contrast to Tagore's traditional conclusion. Citing Tagore's remorse, Ghosh focuses on

Binodini's disappearance as an emancipatory deed. Her refusal to follow patriarchal norms is consistent with who she is. The nation's fight for independence is paralleled by Binodini's desire for freedom [Stacey \(2013\)](#). In her letter to Ashalata, she outlines her ideal environment as one that transcends the confines of the kitchen, courtyard, shutters, and the minor regulations of domestic life. According to Ghosh, this is 'space,' an area devoid of constraints. Social standards are questioned by Binodini's disappearing act, which emphasizes that women can only become independent by escaping constricting, monolithic identities. Ghosh's story offers a commentary on modern society in addition to criticizing social mores of the early 20th century [Hoque \(2019\)](#).

4.4. DECODING THE FEMINIST MESSAGES IN THE FILM 'BARIWALI' USING THE AUTEUR THEORY

In examining the subject of exploitation, Bariwali highlights how incidental the gender dynamic is between the exploiter (Dipankar) and the exploited (Banalata). According to Ghosh, the problem is a common susceptibility to the predatory tendencies of the creative mind. The theme of the repressive guy and the victimized lady appears repeatedly throughout Ghosh's films. The movie explores the evolution of patriarchy from private tyranny within families to public patriarchy, in which a male-dominated society systematically oppresses women. Ghosh's films explore how societal relationships and socio-political structures impact human subjectivity and agency. His stories highlight an exploiter/exploited relationship by exploring minoritarian agency and bringing it to light through character development. In Bariwali, Ghosh deftly uses an intertextual allusion to Chokher Bali's Binodini to highlight themes of liberation and suppressed female agency. Sudeshna contrasts herself with Banalata, who is constrained by her suburban social standing, in Dipankar's film as Binodini. Ghosh demonstrates how patriarchal exploitation transcends intersectional barriers by using Malati, Banalata's maid, as a prism. The predicted power dynamics are challenged by Malati's confidence and intransigence, despite Banalata's attempts to establish *employer-like domination*. The contrast between Banalata's single status and Malati's goals for a settled existence adds depth to the investigation of vulnerability and social standards [Abhinandan Bera. \(2022\)](#).

Malati first challenges *patriarchal authority* by defying Narayan's criticism of her work, which makes navigating masculine agency and patriarchal exploitation difficult. The reason behind Narayan's concern is that he believes Abhijeet's misogynistic male gaze will later justify Malati's possible exposure to the film crew [Niemiec \(2020\)](#). Malati turns into the object of male dominance and male attention. She gives up on Narayan but gives in to Abhijeet's advances. At some point, Malati falls into Narayan's demands; he quits his job and refuses to move into Banalata's house because he thinks it would reflect poorly on his masculine character. [Roy \(2017\)](#).

On the other hand, Dipankar's physical attributes correspond with the ideal of the Bengali Bhadrakalok, representing the ideal guy that Banalata has romanticized. Banalata resists at first, but Dipankar gradually invades her personal space and controls her feelings by playing on her sexuality. Her portrayal as a married lady in Dipankar's film, which contrasts dramatically with her solitary presence in the house, sets up the film's finale and provokes viewers to consider. A wooden barrier, signifying a temporary divide, expresses Dipankar's opportunistic participation and

withdrawal, even if he persistently crosses the boundary into Banalata's room without authorization.

The agreement for a temporary split represents Banalata and Dipankar's divergent views on borders. Banalata increasingly comes to see Dipankar's friendliness as love, but Dipankar deliberately uses the border to further his own goals, stepping over it when Banalata's help is required. But in the end, he builds a wall that remains there forever, cutting off any contact and abruptly cutting Banalata from the completed picture. Ghosh uses powerful visual metaphors, notably in Banalata's dream sequences, to illustrate the intricacy of her sexual suppression that is brought on by seeing the intimacy between Malati and Narayan. Through symbolic imagery, Banalata's nightmares convey her yearning for Dipankar and her need for connection [Roy \(2013\)](#). The story examines questions of freedom and agency while emphasizing Banalata's susceptibility to outside manipulation. From the viewpoints of Banalata and Sudeshna, Dipankar's behavior is examined closely, highlighting his manipulation of emotional bonds and specifically taking advantage of Sudeshna's unwavering devotion through his charm and film offers. To emphasize the idea that *female independence* happens when the inner is taken over by outsiders, disciplining liberation with their departure, Ghosh interweaves allusions throughout texts, evoking Ray's Ghare Baire. With an emphasis on the nuanced examination of power dynamics and female agency, Dipankar's portrayal captures the complicated dynamics of desire and exploitation within the film's plot [Dasgupta & Banerjee \(2016\)](#).

4.5. DECODING THE FEMINIST MESSAGES IN THE FILM 'CHAKHERBALI' USING THE FRAMING THEORY

Framing theory becomes an important tool for academics and researchers in film studies and communication when it comes to the field of cinematic narrative. This theory is frequently used to analyze the subtleties of how movies frame their scenes. It permits a thorough investigation of how filmmakers employ cinematic components to craft stories carefully, shape perceptions, and sway audience interpretations. Essentially, the integration of film research with framing theory offers a sophisticated comprehension of the intentional decisions and methods that mold the audience's cinematic encounter.

- 1) **Narrative Structure:** *Chokher Bali* explores the intricacies of Mahendra and Ashalata's marriage, which experiences a dramatic transformation upon the entrance of Binodini, a young widow. When Binodini enters the scene, Mahendra experiences conflicting feelings for Binodini and Asha, his legal wife. In the meantime, Binodini herself struggles with balancing her need for intimacy with the expectations placed on widowhood by society. The path of events is changed when Bihari, a close friend of Mahendra, shows love and respect for Binodini. The story of Binodini's and Mahendra's extramarital affair is told throughout the book, culminating with Binodini turning down Bihari's proposal of marriage. The narrative ends with Binodini deciding to go and Asha having to accept her spouse. In the context of colonial India, Tagore deftly incorporates contemporary themes like widow *remarriage*, *female literacy*, *gender roles*, *patriarchy*, and *female sexuality*. The story takes place during a time when social reforms were prevalent and included changes in gender roles and caste systems, as well as an increase in the acceptance of Western education and English among Indians. This investigation attempts to dissect the novel's plot progression, character arcs, and thematic components through a cultural analysis that makes use of Cultural Studies' theoretical framework.

Scene 1



Scene 1 Binodini is Offering Tea to Mahendra's Mother.

In a quaint setting on the brink of the Renaissance, a poignant scene unfolds as a young woman delicately serves tea to a widow, acutely aware of the societal shackles that confine her – a prohibition on tea, the absence of jewellery, and the denial of non-vegetarian indulgences. The visual narrative encapsulates the silent rebellion against the constraints of the Middle Ages, symbolizing the dawn of modernity. Despite the societal norms dictating their every move, a silent pact between these two women becomes a powerful testament to their shared desire for a semblance of normalcy. As the tea is poured, unspoken words bridge the gap between tradition and burgeoning aspirations, marking a poignant transition in the unfolding drama of societal evolution.

2) Cinematography and Visual Framing: Surprisingly, Tagore addresses the subtle ethical issues related to camerawork in [Chokher Bali \(2003\)](#), a film that digs into the boundaries of artistic freedom for a camera artist. When Mahendra sneaks out to take pictures of Binodini, he's not just trying to get a picture of her sleeping but also trying to create a unique portrayal of her by mixing his colours. The contrast between Binodini's real personality and the enhanced avatar she presents on television is highlighted by Ghosh. This dynamic is similar to the connection between a literary work and its film version, in which the director exercises creative interpretation like Mahendra's. When Binodini discovers the invasive photography, she chastises Mahendra for what she terms "sheer impropriety", emphasizing the impropriety of taking a person's picture without their permission. Predating the final form of film production, Ghosh's investigation of ethical issues related to image-making is consistent with subsequent discourse on image ethics, particularly in the 1990s with publications such as "Image Ethics: The Moral Rights of Subjects in Photographs, Film, and Television" (1988). Whether in still images or motion movies, Tagore's concern for the variety and independence of camera art highlights his understanding that photography, driven by artistic skill, may transcend the reality of its subject. He highlights how the human and camera eyes are similar, but he also stresses how camera artists have the creative ability to take photography beyond accurate portrayal.

Rituparno Ghosh draws a comparison between seeing a thing in its natural condition and coming across it through its photographic depiction when he claims that a photograph, like an adaptation, is different from its original object. *Chokherbali's* cinematography and visual framing become a sophisticated investigation of creative interpretation, moral dilemmas, and the transformational

potential of the visual medium when viewed in this light. Shades of red are used throughout the picture as symbolic components, signifying blood, passion, and the powerful emotions found in film. The set design and wardrobe selections are particularly striking. Transforming the intensity of the text onto the screen, the film deftly creates a world full of mysterious desire and yearning via painstaking attention to detail, including paintings, flowers, clothes, and accessories.

Scene 2



Scene 2 Where Binodini's Desires Have Been Obstructed by Societal Norms, She is Trying to Wear a Red Top Replicating Mahendra's Wife

In a piteous moment echoing societal restrictions, a widowed woman delicately fingers a vibrant red cloth, an article prohibited by the stringent norms imposed on widows. Her wistful gaze follows her married friends adorned in colourful garments, revealing a yearning to break free from the societal confines that dictate her attire. This scene poignantly captures her desire not merely to look good but to reclaim her basic human right to live unfettered, unrestricted by the suffocating shackles of societal expectations. As she contemplates the forbidden fabric, the silent rebellion unfolds, symbolizing a yearning for normalcy and a plea for individual expression within a stifling tradition.

3) Video Editing: Rituparno Ghosh's film employs cinematic locations and imagery to subvert patriarchal society. To create a sense of dramatic space, he makes use of advanced cinematic techniques from the right compositions to camera positioning and editing. Ghosh examines the elements that are present in his cinematic world, their exclusion, and their interactions with spatial axes. In order to emphasize his growing authority over his chosen medium, he also draws contrasts between on- and off-screen area. The film *Chokherbali* by Rituparno Ghosh delves into the notions of autonomy and self-determination. The audience is addressed by the film as sophisticated, perceptive, and culturally aware people. Ghosh's use of cinematic space and visual registers shapes his protagonists into intelligent, insightful, and socially informed individuals. The film also draws comparisons between Tagore's books and the patriarchal societal framework that the story is set under. Ghosh's criticism is more forthcoming in the book's conclusion, when Binodini decides to follow her own path of pursuing communal freedom but also sacrificing others for her own safety.

Beyond Tagore's book, Ghosh's film emphasizes how women in India lack autonomy and how they must have agency in order to lead less restrictive lives. He understands the significance of both positive and negative freedom, which stresses self-realization and self-fulfilment and requires freeing oneself from limiting and self-diminishing external factors. The film *Chokherbali* effectively

addresses these aspects of freedom, highlighting the importance of understanding and addressing the complex dynamics of Bengali culture.

The significance of the liberated spectator—an active participant seeking meaning—was acknowledged by both Ranciere and Ghosh. They also highlighted creative activity, the realm of sensory experience, and the modification of the sensorium. Rituparno Ghosh's quest for independence was mostly driven by his desire to become a filmmaker. Through his movie and its style, he hoped to create a free universe away from self-annihilating traditions. His goal was for the performance to defy performative constraints and create a rift between the body on stage and the performative frameworks that contextualize it. Ghosh's visual style, which is replete with overlapping discourses and depths of meaning, is a manifestation of his quest for freedom. He creates a gap between the performing body and its contextualizing frames by manipulating bodies, topaz, and framing in order to undermine hierarchies.

In a complex interplay of societal norms and personal desires, a married man approaches a widowed woman with an evident and intimate desire that transcends the restrictive boundaries imposed by society. Both individuals, bound by these norms, share an unspoken passion and a mutual urge to explore their connection. The widowed woman, devoid of societal resilience, longs to embrace her womanhood and desires the attention and affection of a man. The event plays out in front of a witness, providing a sense of protection and recognition that contrasts sharply with the social isolation and indifference they both experience when the married guy tries to satisfy her need for intimacy.

4) Sound and Music: Music director Debojyoti Mishra composed an amazing soundtrack for "Chokher Bali," which stands out due to the absence of playback singing. Sudipta Chakraborty sang the role of Raima Sen, while Sreela Majumdar voiced Aishwarya Rai. Rather, the movie celebrated the technique of dubbing. Purnima Chowdhury, Swagatalakshmi Dasgupta, Paroma Banerjee, Joyeeta Pandey, Shanta Das, and Sangeeta Dutta were among the musicians who contributed to the emotional depth and thematic resonance of the movie. Bishwadeep Chatterjee's sound design, which highlighted the film's intricate plot, gave a depth of auditory richness and improved the entire visual experience.

Ghosh illustrates the communication problems between a widow and a wife in Chokher Bali by using a song called "Rabindrasangeet," penned by Tagore. A Bengali audience is familiar with and enamored with the four-line song. The middle verses, which may be heard during the picnic scenes, suggest that there may be an interaction between women who are suppressed and frustrated in society that conforms to norms. The song demands a complete and comprehensive conversation between widows and wives, or Bengali women who hold two very different places in the sociocultural matrix. The song also illustrates the discord that develops between Binodini and Ashalata when the former becomes a centrepiece of Mahendra's sensual want, Ashalata's husband. The song ends with the verse, "Come one more time, come my friend, / amid my heart; / we will talk of happiness, we will talk of pain, and the heart will be filled."

5) Language and Dialogue: In Primitive Passions, Chow develops this concept of subjectivity and dynamism to consider visual culture. In one scene Binodini says Today marks the anniversary of her husband's passing. For the first time, she finds herself embracing the freedoms afforded by her widowhood - It is obvious that Ghosh does not want to maintain (the value of) patriarchal structures that are typically harmful or restrictive to women. The way in which Ghosh forces

Binodini to "use" her widowhood in order to experience sensual pleasure exemplifies Benjamin's idea of "a shattering of tradition." Chow encourages non-Western filmmakers, like Ghosh, to overcome the difficulty of confronting their cultures' historical objectification in film. This difficulty is seen in "Chokher Bali," particularly in the way widows are portrayed and Binodini's possible destiny is examined. Ghosh deftly subverts the conventional portrayal of Bengali widows by prioritizing Binodini's aspirations over those of society. Through the use of a "technologized visuality," Binodini transforms into a dynamic topic that questions the fixed conventions surrounding Hindu widowhood.

Considering Chow's notion of a "non-Western intellectual" traversing the modern "world as exhibition," Ghosh comes into focus as a filmmaker providing a vibrant self-portrayal of Bengali culture. Under Ghosh's guidance, Binodini rejects being a passive object constrained by convention. Rather, she deliberately modifies her story and questions prevailing assumptions. Ghosh's depiction of Bengali society offers a novel and uplifting viewpoint that transcends Western anthropological preconceptions.

Following are a few other dialogues:

"My dearest life, I know you are not mine forever; but do love me even if it's for this moment. After that I shall vanish into the forest where you cast me, I won't ask anyone for anything again. Give me something that can last me till I die."

“অধিকারলাভের যে মর্যাদা আছে, সেই মর্যাদা রক্ষা করিতে হইলে অধিকারপ্রয়োগকে সংযত করিতে হয়। যতটা পাওয়া যায় ততটা লইয়া টানাটানি করা কাঙালকেই শোভা পায় — ভোগকে খর্ব করিলেই সম্পদের যথার্থ গৌরব।”

"Unless love is rooted in purposeful activity, its delights are neither fulfilling nor lasting."

(Chokher Bali Quotes by Rabindranath Tagore. (n.d.))

6) Genre and Style: A Bengali drama film, "Chokher Bali" deftly blends aspects of romance, societal commentary, and reflection to create a work of art that defies conventional classification. A distinct kind of interrogatory realism is used by filmmaker Rituparno Ghosh. Ghosh's method comprises challenging social conventions, highlighting the complexity of the characters, and using a subtle setting to create a cinematic environment that stimulates the viewer's critical participation. A compelling and thought-provoking cinematic experience, the movie deftly balances the complexities of freedom, desire, and cultural expectations.

Scene 3



Scene 3 Binodini Confronts Bihari, Her Friend, by Telling Him About Her Desires and Emotions.

In a moment of vulnerability, a widowed woman finds solace in surrendering her emotions to a male friend who stands as a staunch supporter of women's empowerment. This male confidant creates a safe space where the woman can openly express her desires and share her innermost feelings without the fear of judgment. As she opens up, the scene becomes a powerful depiction of the transformative potential of genuine connections that transcend societal constraints. It underscores the importance of understanding, support, and a shared commitment to breaking free from the shackles of societal expectations.

7) Representation and Identity: Binodini's seductive sexuality is shown in Ghosh's film, which emphasizes the body as a social place including knowledge and power. The way that Binodini's body is shown subverts the traditional modernist dichotomies of public/private, outside/inside, and margin/centre by acting as a source of sexual titillation and menace. To make the conversation on the Binodini issue dialogic, the movie creates ambivalence toward the seductress Binodini. It is unclear if Binodini is real or just a Maya illusion based on the background music which goes like Land and Sea reverberate with our spells and wiles. The movie shows that Binodini views the world around her as a Maya, or illusion, and that the unexplored Maya region is also home to the unsettling power. The mysterious Binodini, a section of the structured home environment that poses a challenge to the binarism of the center and periphery, is explored in the movie Chokher Bali. In stark contrast to Mahendra's wife Ashalata, who is dressed in a white sari, which represents the giving up of earthly pleasures, Binodini exudes a sensual appeal and body language. The conventional perception of Indian widowhood as embodied renunciation is at odds with Binodini's sexuality and passionate impulses. In Bengal in the nineteenth century, the legal and discursive prohibition on widow remarriage sparked unheard-of societal unease and gave the impression that sexual desire was a feminine initiative and expression. Her independence put her in a risky marginal position that was disruptive to the established order at home. In an attempt to woo her son, Mahendra's mother Rajlakshmi pushes Binodini out of the house, signifying the purification of the home. Binodini is a perceptive observer of her circumstances and is beyond crude carnality, even if she has received criticism for her unsettling sexuality.

The widow Binodini is presented in Chokher Bali as an unaccommodated creature who longs for marriage. Bihari, her spouse, is horrified by her diminished status and rejects her. When Binodini goes back to her husband's village, many perceive her as abnormal. She prepares to die by drowning herself and writes an apologetic letter to Bihari. But Binodini is unable to end his own life. When Mahendra moves in with her, Binodini understands that living with her is no longer a punishment for him. Moving to a bajra on the Ganges, she swears chastity for the duration of their stay together. This new area promotes cognitive development and allows for release. As the movie comes to an end, Bihari asks Binodini to marry him in order to free her from her husband. With its symbolic realm of representation, Ghosh's Binodini is a postmodern reworking of colonial discourse on gender and identity. By bringing attention to the geographical aspect of human subjectivity, it emphasizes the significance of cultural politics of difference and identity. By characterizing a woman's territory as a domain, Chokher Bali adds to the conversation on free femininity in India.

Scene 4



Scene 4 Binodini Leaves Behind Everything from Her Inheritance to Relationships after Facing Multiple Rejections and When in Kashi, She Comes Across her Friend Bihari.

In a transformative scene, a widowed woman decides to renounce her inheritance and existing relationships, seeking solace in the sacred city of Kashi. Initially attempting to establish a connection with a married man, she grapples with the realization that not all desires can be fulfilled, especially when they involve the emotions of others. Undeterred, she encounters a dear male friend in Kashi and proposes marriage, only to face rejection. This unexpected turn of events prompts a profound self-reflection, as she grapples with the implications of seeking companionship as a widow. It becomes a poignant exploration of her innermost desires and the realization that genuine happiness doesn't hinge on societal acceptance or external validation. Ultimately, finding strength in her newfound understanding, she chooses to settle in Kashi, embracing a life where her autonomy and self-discovery take precedence.

4.6. DECODING THE FEMINIST MESSAGES IN THE FILM 'BARIWALI' USING THE FRAMING THEORY

Framing theory is crucial for film studies and communication, analysing how filmmakers craft scenes and shape perceptions. It integrates film research with framing theory to understand intentional decisions and methods shaping audience experiences.

- 1) **Narrative Structure:** The plot of Rituparno Ghosh's 1999 film *Bariwali* deftly tells the tale of Banalata, an unmarried middle-aged lady whose life takes a convoluted turn following the unexpected death of her future husband. Ghosh skilfully delves into the political dimensions of sexual identity formation within the patriarchal discourse. Banalata, neither a widow nor a wife, stands as a liminal figure challenging the normative expectations of hetero-patriarchal society. Ghosh exposes the calculated conspiracy ingrained in patriarchal frameworks, portraying Banalata as the custodian of Mohini Malancha (The Garden of Illusions). The estate becomes a metaphor for her lonely and isolated existence, reflecting the limitations imposed by societal norms. The film unfolds as Banalata's identity transforms into the "lady of the house," exposing the gaps and absences in the patriarchal institution. Ghosh's nuanced exploration raises questions about the threatening presence of unmarried women within hetero-normative structures, paralleling the challenges faced by widows in similar societal setups.

Scene 1



Scene 1 Banalata is Awestruck Seeing her Maid Malati and her Lover Deepankar Gradually Come Closer and Become Intimate, The Experience of Everything in Front of her Doesn't Just Make her Disgusted, But She Also Has the Urge to Understand Womanhood Through Someone Else's Eyes.

In a riveting scene, the solitary landlady of a grand mansion unexpectedly witnesses an intimate connection blossoming between her lover and the maid. Overwhelmed with a mix of emotions, ranging from surprise to indignation, she grapples with the complexities of understanding womanhood and the unfolding dynamics before her eyes. The scene encapsulates her visceral reactions—feelings of aggression, a desire to comprehend the underlying motivations, and a sense of awe at the unexpected turn of events. The landlady's internal struggle becomes a poignant exploration of the intricate web of human emotions, challenging societal norms, and unraveling the complexities of relationships within the confines of her stately residence.

2) Cinematography and Visual Framing: Vivek Shah's exceptional cinematography skilfully incorporates the film "Bariwali's" magnificence. The dialogue between the Officer and Prasanna opens the visual narrative with an eye-catching window shot of the temple, hinting at the inventiveness to follow [Cottino-Jones \(2010\)](#). Extended views of the residence provide a pleasant ambiance, and significant events, such as Banalata witnessing Dipankar go from a window, are positioned to intensify the intensity of the emotions. Notably, Banolata's mental storm is symbolically mirrored in the storm scene when she sees Malati and Narayan kissing. Dream scenes have a powerful visual impact, particularly the one where Banalata is seen in her wedding dress, which makes the spectator feel her pain. The way that the cinematography portrays Dipankar courting Banalata for his film is excellent. Authenticity is increased by the careful use of sets and costumes, as well as by paying close attention to details in scenes like cooking and dining. Using metaphors and symbols, Banalata deftly challenges gender norms and conventional customs while expressing her desperate need for company. With its masterful use of cinematography, "Bariwali" presents itself as an immersive experience with a thrilling narrative.

Scene 2



Scene 2 Banalata is Eavesdropping on the Conversation that has Taken Place Between the Housekeeper and the Maid Where they are Discussing the Bad Condition of the Mansion Making her Feel a Pessimistic Hopelessness

In a moment, the solitary landlady, grappling with an existential crisis in her expansive mansion, accidentally overhears a conversation between her maid and housekeeper. The discussion revolves around the deteriorating condition of the mansion, casting an unexpected light on the sense of loss of control in her seemingly independent life. The revelation strikes a chord deep within her, intensifying feelings of loneliness and prompting a yearning for connection and guidance. The scene beautifully captures the vulnerability beneath her strong facade, unravelling the complexities of her emotional landscape within the grand yet desolate confines of her home.

3) Video Editing: Rituparno Ghosh himself attests that in the complex tapestry of *Bariwali*, he skillfully weaves a story that goes beyond the traditional depiction of a woman's exploitation. The movie goes beyond what at first glance seems to be its topic, delving into the discourse of exploitation and showing how characters change from being the exploiter or the abused. Ghosh uses a narrative that subverts social standards in his lifelong quest to reveal suppressed passions, reflecting his philosophy in both life and art. Although specifics of the film's editing methods are not disclosed, Ghosh's general themes of liberty, interpersonal connections, politics, identity, and sexuality allude to a sophisticated and purposeful editing approach. "Bariwali" and Tagore's "Chokher Bali" interact in a way that suggests a complex narrative framework where editing most certainly plays a key part in smoothly tying these layers together.

The editing may use non-linear storytelling devices like flashbacks or dream sequences, as well as deliberate scene juxtapositions and small pace changes to highlight the characters' transformational journey. These methods could enhance the movie's emotional resonance and thematic richness. The editing may represent Ghosh's subversion of traditional appropriateness by introducing unexpected transitions or jarring changes in chronological sequence, which encourages viewers to consider conventional wisdom in the same way that the story's protagonists do. Even if particular editing details are not provided, it may be assumed that Ghosh made deliberate decisions that further the film's examination of Bengali culture's socioeconomic dynamics and their wider repercussions.

Scene 3



Scene 3 Banalata is Mentally Tired of Being Alone for So Long That Now She Desires Another Male's Presence for the Fulfilment of Sexual Intimacy and Being Loved Under Someone's Dominance.

In a pivotal moment, the female protagonist, wearied by prolonged solitude, yearns for the company of a man to fill the void of love and physical intimacy in her life. This profound desire is visually symbolized when someone unexpectedly throws red ink on her, creating a vivid red tinge on her persona. The red hue

becomes a powerful metaphor, signifying her longing to be noticed, attended to, and acknowledged. It marks a turning point, as she no longer wishes to remain alone and now seeks fulfilment by exploring connections with other men, embracing her desires unapologetically. The scene captures the essence of her quest for connection, beautifully depicted through the transformative symbolism of the red ink.

4) Sound and Music: The film *Bariwali* and its sound design are flawlessly synced, resulting in a harmonious whole. In addition to giving the story a deeper significance, Rupa Ganguly's moving performances calm the audience and mix well with the situations as they are performed. From the delicate stridulating of crickets and the beautiful singing of birds to the rhythmic repetition of spinning cotton, amazing attention to detail is apparent. The sound of the clock ticking away turns from being merely a sound to a moving feature that highlights Banalata's intense need. The filmmaker's methodical technique enhances the sound quality and raises the emotional impact of the movie.

Scene 4



Scene 4 When Banalata Agrees to the Shoot and the Director Comes to Her Place, She Takes the Authority to Serve Him Lunch and She Gets Someone to Share Her Problems.

In this scene, the landlady, grappling with the solitude that has defined her existence, agrees to a film shooting in her mansion. As she takes on the role of a gracious host, serving lunch to the director, a subtle shift occurs in the dynamics of her loneliness. In this exchange, she seizes the opportunity to confide in him, sharing the burdens and complexities of her solitary life. For the first time in a long while, she finds solace in having someone to connect with, someone to lean on, and perhaps, someone to love. This moment becomes a cathartic release, symbolizing her yearning for companionship and the potential for a newfound emotional anchor in her life.

5) Genre and Style: In *Bariwali*, Rituparno Ghosh explores the ordinary life of Banalata (Kiron Kher), the last living descendant of an aristocratic family living in a dull suburban home. The movie shows her existence as an apparently lazy one, one that consists of watching television, doing mundane housework, and interacting with her vivacious maid Malati and her devoted but elderly servant Prasanna. When a movie production team shows interest in renting the estate for a historical play, the story takes an exciting turn. Normally restricted to her solitary routine, Banalata is enthralled by the entrance of the film team, particularly the charming director Dipankar and the stunning actress Sudeshna. Even though Banalata knows about Dipankar's previous relationship with Sudeshna and his marital status, she is mesmerized by this newly earthly bond. The movie tells the story of her brief interaction with the cast and crew, during which she even has a little role, before being abandoned when they leave. Based

on Ghosh's adaptation of a short tale, this moving drama addresses themes of treachery, loneliness, and unmet dreams, offering a powerful example of the drama genre.

Scene 5



Scene 5 Here Banalata Realizes that the Director is not Coming to Meet her to Whom She Once Thought of Surrendering Herself. and the Director Just Sent Her the Remuneration for her Acting with an Invitation to Come and Watch Her Part in the Film. But Later She Got to Know Somehow Her Part Was Removed from that Movie Which Broke Her to Pieces and She Cried Her Heart Out Refusing to Watch the Movie with Her Maid.

In a heart-wrenching moment, the landlady experiences a profound realization as the director, whom she had once envisioned as a potential source of solace, fails to meet her in person. Instead, he sends her remuneration along with an invitation to witness her part in the film. However, her excitement turns to despair when she discovers that her role has been mercilessly excised from the movie. Overwhelmed by a sense of betrayal, she breaks down, shedding tears that mirror the shattered fragments of her aspirations. Refusing to watch the film, she shares this moment of anguish with her maid, encapsulating the profound disappointment of unfulfilled expectations and the poignant sting of abandonment.

6) Representation and Identity: A lonely middle-aged woman lives in the crumbling splendour of an ancient country home. She has given up on marriage after a terrible event, and she shares her quarters with an eccentric retainer and a newly recruited maid. Due to financial difficulties, she unwillingly lets a film team use her house, which throws her into a maze of intrusions. Her repressed impulses are awoken by the charming director's supposedly sympathetic aura, and she falls in love with him without realizing his deceptive motives. Her innocent desire to gain his love is explored in the movie, leading to her appearing in a minor role. But as her letters are ignored and she learns that her importance has been reduced to a simple contact for the film masterpiece, the brutal truth of exploitation hits home. This moving story explores the intricate concepts of identity and representation, emphasizing the stark contrast between the protagonist's real-life experience and her demotion to a supporting position in the realm of celluloid art.

4.7. ACCRUED FEMINIST MESSAGES FROM THE FILM CHAKHERBALI AND BARIWALI

With its devastating portrayal of complicated human connections and the subversive conflicts inside a restrictive societal system, Rituparno Ghosh's wonderfully produced Chokherbali goes beyond the usual story of widows in Bengali culture. The film explores the lives of widows, showing the daily struggles they encounter and presenting them in a humanistic way. The movie transforms into

a potent subversive record, showing the heartbreaking moments when personal decisions collide with social expectations in a culture where widows are supposed to repress their feelings [Hollinger \(1998\)](#). A strong feminist message is made in the scene with the widow consuming tea, which is considered prohibited. It is also made in the symbolic Bijoya Doshomi sequence when the sharp distinctions enforced by society are symbolized by the difference between Ashalata and Binodini. Ghosh's narrative explores a deep journey between two women who represent life's little pleasures, innocence, and laughter while also challenging social norms that limit women according to their marital status [Stacey \(2004\)](#). Through its sophisticated storytelling, Chokherbali transforms into a gripping examination of sacrifice, desire, and the unwavering quest for individuality in the face of social expectations.

Rituparno Ghosh's Bariwali tells the story of Banalata, a lonely middle-aged woman who challenges societal norms by renting her family home to a film production company. Despite her understanding of Deepankar's personal life, Banalata becomes emotionally vulnerable when she discovers the director exploits her. Bariwali's feminist theme is centred on Banalata's tenacity and defiance of social standards. In spite of her emotional entanglements, Banalata does not present herself as a woman whose existence depends on a guy. Rather, she becomes an autonomous, self-sufficient person who can make her own decisions about her life. In a masterful use of his cinematic lens, Ghosh reveals the cruelty of a patriarchal society, an issue also addressed in parallel cinema by directors such as Satyajit Ray and Shyam Benegal. Bariwali is a moving reflection on the complexities of emotions, the intricacies of relationships, and the unsung challenges that Indian women endure in their daily families. The film by Rituparno Ghosh serves as a powerful wake-up call to society, imploring people to abandon chauvinist views of women and to reflect on how women are portrayed in Indian cinema.

5. CONCLUSION

Ghosh's cinematic journey has paralleled the process of middle-class men and women accepting reality and discovering who they are in it. In Ghosh's film, the female characters bravely explore their self to find their interests [Williams \(2017\)](#). Destinations, preferences, ambitions, and dreams. These aspirations frequently transcend traditional conventions, are not restricted to marriage and motherhood, nor are they confined to sacrosanct regions of society rules. Instead, Ghosh's characters transcend these constrained positions and conditioned environments approved for women through hegemonic notions. In their quest for survival, the characters look for their identities and a place for themselves. The figures are in a processual shape that is never finished because their objective is about understanding oneself and finding the unknown. Furthermore, gender socialization puts a person in a cage of cultural standards; nonetheless, this realization that living by these sociocultural norms is impossible triggers the quest to understand reality. Because of this, reality is not binary but rather multifaceted, requiring bravery and conflict to embrace fully.

According to Ghosh, female subjectivity exists only inside the constraints of social structures and situations. The "female ideals" ethical and cultural standards are prevalent in a variety of social processes, behaviours, contexts, and situations. Equally crucial is the recognition that women's everyday responses to these situations are often complex. Since females are always involved in applications and interactions with moral discussions, where women express themselves both from within the prevailing discourse and from an external perspective in Ghosh's films, women are shown as fighting and succumbing to hegemonic norms, respectively

Roy (2017). Consequently, seeing Indian women to be cognitively "fixed" inside the sterile and homogenous roles of wife and mother gravely weakens women's status as complex individuals. Women may be re-envisioned as multifaceted agents who participate in many settings and avoid strict social categorization to express their subjective voice, provided that we begin with a paradigm of "mutation, metamorphosis, and diaspora" Shohat (2023).

Ghosh uses his protagonist to bring the whispers from the kitchen, bedrooms, and secret passageways to life. Ghosh's films aim to discuss the challenge of being contemporary while juggling traditions. In addition, Ghosh exposes the intricate web of aspirations and ambitions while upending gender, sex, and identity Mizejewski (1999). In his films, the frequently suppressed impulses and often limited fantasies find their unfettered realization. In addition, Ghosh unsettles the world of binary and heteronormativity and offers a biting criticism of patriarchy.

The study explored nuanced portrayal of female desires, delving deep in to societal constraints and personal struggles faced by the female characters in the films of Rituparno Ghosh. There are research find outs which draw the shape research inference below mentioned.

- The research focused on female desire, challenging patriarchy, complex relationship in both the films (Bariwali and Chhokherbali)
- The study investigated the female solidarity and rivalry in the female.
- Rituparno Ghosh's film clearly depicted the isolation and emotional awakening of the female leads.
- Feminist messages abound in Rituparno Ghosh's films, which provide insightful analyses of the complex nature of feminine desire. "Chokherbali" and "Baariwali" are notable for their depictions of women's lives, challenges, and unwavering quest for identity and fulfilment. They are multifaceted and sympathetic.
- The strength and nuanced qualities of Rituparno Ghosh's female characters are praised with his criticism of patriarchal conventions.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

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