



INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER  
INDIA

2395-2636 (Print):2321-3108 (online)

## RITWIK GHATAK'S FILMS OF DISPLACEMENT: THE EXPERIENCE OF A RESETTLED COMMUNITY

ANUSKA BARAL

MA English, Shri Shikshayatan College, University of Calcutta

Email: [anuskabaral99@gmail.com](mailto:anuskabaral99@gmail.com)



### Article info

Article Received:21/04/2023

Article Accepted:08/05/2023

Published online:13/05/2023

DOI: [10.33329/rjelal.11.2.63](https://doi.org/10.33329/rjelal.11.2.63)

### Abstract

Following the Bengal Partition of 1947, and the creation of Bangladesh in 1971, numerous Hindus and Muslims were forced to leave their homes and resettle in different regions, establishing new homes for themselves. This situation has been depicted in several movies that explore the emotional journey of these immigrants as they struggle to adapt to a new country that was once so familiar but now feels foreign and distant. The concept of 'home' has been redefined, and the immigrants are left feeling close yet far away from the place they once knew. Ritwik Ghatak is a renowned filmmaker who is known for his cinematic exploration of the post-partition trauma and the feeling of alienation that came with it. His films are a reflection of the uprooted community's struggle to find a sense of belongingness in a new land. Through his films, Ghatak provides a unique perspective on the struggles and challenges faced by those who were displaced as a result of the partition of India. His films explore themes of identity, belonging, and cultural traditions, while also critiquing the idea of a single national identity. Ghatak's films provide a powerful portrayal of the lives of refugees and those who have been forced to leave behind their homes and communities, while still holding on to their cultural and linguistic identities. His films are an important cultural artifact that provide a window into the rich cultural heritage of the Bengali people, while also raising questions about the impact of displacement and the meaning of home. The objective of this paper is to analyze the diasporic sentiments of refugees who were compelled to abandon their homelands, as captured by Ritwik Ghatak in his Partition Trilogy. Through a comprehensive examination of Ghatak's films, the paper aims to investigate the themes of identity, belonging, cultural traditions, and nationalism within the Bengali diaspora.

Keywords: Ritwik Ghatak, Displacement, Partition Trilogy, Culture, Belongingness

### 1. Introduction

The term "diaspora" refers to the dispersal of people from their original homeland, often due to political or economic factors. The partition of India in 1947, which led to the mass migration of millions of people and the creation of Pakistan, is one of the most significant events in modern South Asian history that is often associated with the concept of

diaspora. The partition caused a profound impact on the social, political, and cultural fabric of the region, creating a new category of people - refugees - who were forced to leave their homes and migrate to new territories. These refugees faced numerous challenges, from finding shelter and basic necessities to grappling with complex issues of identity and belonging in their new homes. The impact of the

partition on these refugees and their descendants has reverberated across generations, shaping their experiences of migration, displacement, and cultural hybridity. Consequently, the partition and its aftermath have been the subject of many works of literature, art, and film that seek to explore the ways in which diasporic communities negotiate their sense of self in the face of traumatic events and upheavals.

The Indian partition and its impact on Bengal had a profound influence on the renowned Bengali filmmaker, Ritwik Ghatak, who experienced the trauma of displacement firsthand. Ghatak was born in East Bengal (now Bangladesh) and moved to West Bengal after the partition, where he witnessed the suffering and pain of refugees who had lost their homes and loved ones. Through his films, Ghatak highlights the challenges faced by refugees who had to abandon their homes and communities and the struggle to reconcile their past with their present. He explores the impact of displacement on cultural traditions and the tensions between tradition and modernity. Ghatak's films portray the complexities of the diasporic experience, capturing the pain and trauma of displacement while also celebrating the resilience and strength of those who were forced to leave their homes.

His Partition Trilogy - consisting of *Meghe Dhaka Tara* (1960), *Komal Gandhar* (1961), and *Subarnarekha* (1962) - explores the themes of displacement, identity, and cultural fragmentation in the context of the partition. The partition also led to the fragmentation of Bengal's rich cultural and linguistic traditions. The films provide a powerful commentary on the impact of political and social upheaval on cultural identity, emphasizing the importance of preserving cultural traditions and linguistic heritage in the face of displacement and fragmentation. The Bengali language, which had been the predominant language in the undivided province, was split into two - Bengali in West Bengal and Bangla in East Bengal (now Bangladesh). The use of the local dialect of the eastern part of Bengal by the chief protagonists in their private family conversations serves as a poignant reminder of their loss. Despite their efforts to cling to their memories and experiences, they cannot help but feel a sense

of desperation as they grapple with the reality of their situation. The loss they have suffered is palpable and ever-present, and they struggle to find a way to come to terms with it. Their use of the dialect within the intimate space of the family serves as a poignant cue to the cultural and linguistic displacement that they have experienced. Despite their best efforts to hold onto their heritage and identity, they are unable to escape the harsh reality of their situation. The loss they have suffered is not only personal but also cultural and historical, reflecting the broader experiences of the people of Bengal during the traumatic events of partition. As such, their story serves as a powerful testament to the resilience and strength of the human spirit in the face of adversity.

The objective of this paper is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the diasporic sentiments of refugees who were forced to leave their homelands, as portrayed by Ritwik Ghatak in his Partition Trilogy. Through a comprehensive examination of Ghatak's films, the paper aims to investigate the themes of identity, belonging, cultural traditions, and nationalism within the Bengali diaspora.

## **2. Partition Literature and Cinema**

The basic sense of belongingness and citizenship in India is often characterized through the eyes of partition. Though the trauma of the violence and separation remains, the memorialization of it is not effaced by the state and thus the literature, art, oral traditions comes into play. The historians have provided with the accurate scenarios but it's only the cinematic representations of the same that highlights the loss, pain, sufferings and filmmakers' works to counter the official histories through their focalizing stories on an individual basis.

Historian Mushirul Hasan in his article *Memories of a Fragmented Nation: Revisiting the Histories of India's Partition* published in *Economic and Political Weekly* (October 10, 1998), argues:

"If the histories of Partition are to be rewritten, there are several reasons why we must judiciously draw upon the intellectual

resources made available to us by such creative writers. They expose the inadequacy of numerous narratives on independence and Partition, compel us to explore fresh themes and adopt new approaches that have eluded the grasp of social scientists, and provide a foundation for developing an alternative discourse to current expositions of a general theory on inter-community relations. Their strength lies in representing a grim and sordid contemporary reality without drawing religion or a particular community as the principal reference point.” (Hasan)

Cinema confronts the loss and trauma in a public sphere through a collective mourning. Post-Independence, cinema was the means of expressing the internal monologue, the frustrations, the sufferings, the political ideology and constituting ideas of nation and nationalism. Everyone wanted to be a part of the newly formed nation and cinema helped in providing a sense of common ground with many others. The omission of violence can be attributed to the aesthetic distance and the fear of censorship. (Chakravarty) Most of the partition movies took refuge in allegories to represent the main idea.

While there are numerous representation of the partition of Punjab in the national cinema, Bengal partition is neglected in comparison. With the partition of Bengal, the area witnessed a large influx of refugees from the neighboring nation of the then East-Pakistan in order to preserve their religious and cultural heritage. This resulted in the lack of proper residential areas and also attributed to the sexual and psychological victimization of women in the domestic as well as the social sphere. It also resulted in the sense of loss and memories of the home. On one hand the Bengali partition literature spans over the rural-urban Bengal, whereas on the other hand the cinema includes the trope of building a new life by a refugee by overcoming the past trauma of getting uprooted from their home.

Evoking the sense of up-rootedness, exile and un-belongingness, Ritwik Ghatak like Manto suffered the trauma himself as he arrived in Calcutta

as a refugee. Initially starting off as a writer in his early 20s, he penned down several short stories. He even joined the Indian People's Theatre Association which was the cultural wing of Communist Party of India and began to not only write plays but also direct and act in them. But soon he noticed the far reaching potential of films as a medium.

What is interesting is that unlike the popular partition literature, Ghatak's films did not specifically focus on the post-partition politics or the partition itself. His Partition trilogy namely, *Meghe Dhaka Tara* (1960), *Komal Gandhar* (1961), and *Subarnarekha* (1962), is usually unsettling as it uses elements of our own culture and it hits close to home. His creations do not explicitly discuss the partition elements and he works to the level of denial in dealing with the loss and memory.

### **2.1 *Meghe Dhaka Tara* -1960**

The movie *Meghe Dhaka Tara* sheds light on the themes of displacement and exile, particularly in the context of India's partition and independence in 1947. The film depicts the plight of people who were forced to leave their homes and settle in new territories, as well as the impact of this displacement on their lives. Additionally, the movie touches upon the idea of the classical, creative, and feminine principles being marginalized and disregarded in society, despite their potential to nurture and contribute positively. This highlights the ruthless displacement of these principles from cultural and social spaces, leading to their exile. Contrary to some Indian commentators, who perceive the film as a return to the epic, it marks the emergence of a new cinema that Ghatak pioneered. The film explores questions of nationality primarily through memory and melodious excess, rejecting direct referentiality and rhetorical identity. Ghatak's contribution to Indian melodramatic tradition is evident in his infusion of melody into memory and movement into myths. Moreover, the film pushes the debate on nationality beyond ideological certainty, dissolving facial iconicities into sounds that operate through dialectics or relays between melody and dissonance. The dissonance and distortion stem from the image's state of imbalance, much like the uprooted refugee searching for fleeting moments of home.

The film uses haunting close-ups that transcend the reality of socio-political space and emerge as masks of light.

In my first view of *Meghe Dhaka Tara*, I failed to grasp the allegorical representation of the struggles faced by refugees after partition. The film does not explicitly mention the location of the refugee camp on the outskirts of Calcutta, where people are attempting to rebuild their lives. At its core, *Meghe Dhaka Tara* revolves around a refugee family attempting to survive in a resettlement colony in Calcutta. After being uprooted during the Partition from their homes in Bengal, the family struggles to maintain a middle-class existence and stay together. The film's narrative primarily follows Nita, the eldest daughter and the sole provider for her family. The story unfolds through eight movements as Nita returns home after a day's work, becoming increasingly entrenched in the task of keeping her family afloat amid severe economic uncertainty. As Nita's homeward journey becomes more strained with each movement, she gradually loses touch with reality and withdraws into the realm of myth. She is caught in a paradoxical role of a nurturing mother figure, which is exploited by her mother and younger siblings. As her younger family members leave home one by one in search of better lives, the bitter irony of heading home becomes painfully evident, akin to a terminal illness.

The movie sheds light on the challenges faced by working women in supporting their families. Ghatak aimed to portray the trauma and insecurity faced by displaced Bengali refugees in the aftermath of the Partition of Bengal in 1947. From the outset, Nita is considered the epitome of "Jagadhatri," or the Mother Goddess for sustainability, as she even gives her meager income to her siblings to fulfill their desires and later to her mother. Nita's selfless character can be attributed to her birth on Jagadhatri Puja. Her nostalgic reminiscing of her childhood memories of celebrating her birthday with her father in their homeland subtly alludes to the loss of identity felt by the refugees.

Nita shares a close bond with her elder brother, Shankar, who is not responsible enough to take on the family's financial burden. However,

unlike the other family members, he is not selfish and remains a pillar of support for Nita. Even when Nita is suffering, Shankar takes care of her and provides her with assurance by embracing her. Nita's younger brother, Montu, leads a lavish lifestyle and leaves home when he secures a factory job. However, he soon became liable after being involved in an accident. Her younger sister, Gita, uses her flirtatious nature to attract Sanat, Nita's love interest, when Nita refuses to marry him until her family becomes stable. In most cases, parents are a source of solace, but Nita's mother does not stop Gita from pursuing her older sister's love. She used manipulative tactics to prevent Nita from leaving her family after marriage. Even Nita's father, who is dependent on his daughter, instigates her to leave the house when she is unwell. The song track *Ai Go Uma Kobe Loi* during the scene in which Nita is forced to leave the house is ironic. The song is traditionally used to signify a mother's emotions when she goes back to her husband's abode (a mythical reference to Menaka and Uma). The director employs Indian mythology to create metaphors and add layers to the central character. Nita is portrayed as a desolate daughter, not as a newlywed bride. The movie's ending scene features Nita's heart-wrenching cry of "Ami Bachte Chai, Ami Bachbo" (I want to live, I will live) to her brother, which symbolizes the essence of all the displacements and trauma associated with forced immigration. The scene is accompanied by loud, non-diegetic cloudburst sounds, which are used as musical instruments. In his article titled *Partition Through Lens-The Emergence of New Bengali Woman*, Rajdeep Sinha mentions,

The deep desire of Nita to live makes us believe that loss and death are ever present, forming the basis of human existence. (Sinha)

(Nita's deep desire to live is presented as a testament to the resilience of the human spirit in the face of adversity. It acknowledges the reality of impermanence and mortality, while also highlighting the resilience and strength of the human spirit.)

The theme of exile is not limited to the displacement and marginalization of the refugee family in *Meghe Dhaka Tara*. The film also explores

the displacement of classical-romantic ideals embodied by Nita's father, who is nostalgic for the artistic and cultural shifts of 19th-century Bengal, where the folk art and poetry of Keats and Wordsworth coexisted. However, he became insignificant in the face of new forms of socio-political aggression. In contrast, Nita's elder brother, Shankar, who aspires to be a classical vocalist, initially faces marginalization but eventually negotiates the new world and asserts the dignity of the classical-romantic mode of being. Nita's anguished cry, which expresses her desire to live even as she faces death, must be understood within the context of this assertion of dignity. The film suggests that feminine, creative, and classical-romantic principles cannot survive prosaically. This call for dignity extends beyond the characters to the people brutally split between two zones despite belonging to the same melodic memory-resonance.

Throughout the film, the presence of a steam engine train on the riverbank serves as a clear reference to the Partition, symbolizing the transportation of uprooted refugees between India and East Pakistan. It also foreshadows the eventual separation of Nita and Sanat. As Nita struggles to recover from the effects of self-sacrifice, deprivation, and exploitation, her anguished cry becomes a haunting echo of the voiceless displaced people who have lost their homes and identities. In the house, the sound of a boiling kettle is amplified to underscore the mother's anxiety, as she eavesdrops on Nita and Sanat's conversation, seeing their relationship as a threat to the family's stability. Ghatak skillfully employed other sounds in the film to enhance the emotional impact of key moments.

The 2013 film *Meghe Dhaka Tara* narrates the life of Ghatak, the director of the original film, and portrays his struggle with the lack of a happy family. Additionally, the film highlights the socio-political environment of contemporary West Bengal during the Tebhaga and Naxalite movements. The director, Kamalleshwar Mukherjee, effectively portrays the cultural and political influences that shaped Ghatak's artistic vision, giving audiences a deeper understanding of the context in which the original film was created. Ghatak employs songs and Indian mythology to great effect in *Meghe Dhaka*

*Tara*, creating a melodramatic context that resonates primarily with his Bengali audience. Overall, his films have a strong Indian sensibility.

## 2.2 *Komal Gandhar* - 1961

Ghatak not only witnessed the struggles of displaced refugees but also experienced them firsthand, having been uprooted from his birthplace in Dhaka by the dividing line. The trauma of displacement left an indelible mark on his mind, and he became obsessed with exploring it in his artistic works. Ghatak was also a member of the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA), and he incorporated the principles of radical theatre and the partition into his filmmaking. In his essay titled *Out of the Waiting Room of History: Ritwik Ghatak's Cinema of Partition*, Swagato Chakravorty provides a brief introduction to *Komal Gandhar*,

*Komal Gandhar* weaves together a romance with an investigation of the possibilities for artistic and secular collectivity against the backdrop of a nationalist crisis. It is also the most forthrightly theatrical of Ghatak's films — it is worth recalling that Ghatak had extensive experience with the theater, and wrote at length on the relations between theater and cinema (Chakravorty).

In the opening sequence of the movie *Komal Gandhar*, the camera focuses on close up shot of a theatrical performance, specifically the second act. The scene portrays a conversation between an elderly man, whose eyes are heavily accentuated with kohl, and a young boy.

"Keno jabo? Bojha amake. Erom komol desh ta chhere, amar nodi Padma chere, why should I go?"(Why should I go tell me? Leaving the fertile land and my beloved Padma River behind, why should I go?)

"Jabe khabar jonno, ei sesh sujog ekhono soronarathi hou."(To eat, it is the last chance to be a refugee)

"Ki soronarathi?"(What refugee?)

"Bastu hara soronarathi, naam diyeche kagoj er babura." (Uprooted refugee, it is the name given by the journalists)

.....

"Ami kopal pura, amar baap er kopal pura, amar choddo gusti kopal pura, jei kotar jonmo diyechi shob Kota r kopal pura. Ei Padma r pare jonmailam keno" (I am unlucky; my ancestors and future generations are unlucky. Why did I take birth in this fertile land, on the banks of the river Padma?) (Own translation)

The dialogue between the two characters highlights the excruciating pain and suffering experienced by refugees who were displaced from their homes and labelled as "bastu hara" or those who have lost their homes.

In the scene where the theatre group visits the banks of the river Padma, the use of songs and the memories of Anasuya and Bhrigu draw us into the emotional depths of their experiences. As they stand on the banks and discuss their losses, we feel the weight of their pain. Anasuya remembers her mother who died on the other side, and Bhrigu recalls his father's tragic death as a beggar and his mother's death due to starvation. The scene is a poignant reminder of the human toll of displacement and serves as a powerful commentary on the devastating effects of social and political upheaval. In this powerful moment, Bhrigu finally breaks down his walls as he remembers the train tracks that used to connect him to his home, but now only serve as a painful reminder of separation. Another refugee tries to pray to the river, showing his devotion to something he still considers home. Anasuya's memories of her childhood and her feelings of being a stranger in this new country add to the emotional intensity of the scene. Both Bhrigu and Anasuya were sharing their memories of the past, revealing how the trauma of displacement had left them feeling isolated and lonely. They talked about how the pain had changed their once-jovial natures, highlighting the profound impact that forced migration can have on an individual's emotional well-being. As the scene draws to a close, the camera zooms in on the end of the train tracks, emphasizing the brutal nature of the uprooting and the deep scars it has left on the refugees. The background cries of women chanting *Dohai Ali* (a

traditional East Bengali 'Bhatiyali' song), serve as a haunting reminder of the trauma and grief that continues to haunt those who were forced to flee their homes.

Bhrigu attempted to incite Anasuya's acting skills by evoking memories of her past, reminding her of how she was compelled to leave her own home and that one day she would be forced to leave India, her new home. He portrayed how the country and its natural beauty would attempt to prevent her departure. Following this scene, a child's appearance portrayed the refugees' efforts to adapt to their new country and make it their home. The child's plea for assistance symbolized their struggle to establish a new home in the new country. The inclusion of a scene from the Sanskrit classic *Shakuntala* in the film has significant resonances and nuances that would have touched the sensibilities of even the most obtuse of individuals. Metaphorically, *Shakuntala* represents India, *Dushyanta* represents the Communist Party of India, and their prospective child represents the ordinary people of India. The inclusion of this scene from *Shakuntala* serves as a powerful commentary on the political situation in India at the time, and the plight of ordinary people who were often forgotten by the ruling elite.

The love story between Anasuya and Bhrigu represents the unity between the people of West and East Bengal and is often accompanied by wedding music. The plot of *Komal Gandhar*, which revolves around the rivalry between two theatre groups, can be seen as a metaphor for the forced separation of East and West Bengal. Anasuya's efforts to reunite the two groups for the performance of *Shakuntala* can be interpreted as Ghatak's attempt to bring people together through his cinematic presentations, despite the barriers that divide them. Ghatak's own experiences of displacement and the trauma of the partition are reflected in the film's themes, as he uses the medium of cinema to explore the pain and suffering caused by these events and to encourage unity and reconciliation. Ghatak's innovative use of dialect and folk music, as well as his incorporation of the histories of Hinduism and Islam, East and West Bengal, allows him to reconstruct forms of collectivity and kinship in the midst of the traumatic

aftermath of Partition, a catastrophe that was the direct result of centuries of colonial rule. By blending these elements together, Ghatak is able to create a deeply resonant portrait of a people struggling to forge new connections and identities in the face of immense adversity. The film is a testament to Ghatak's artistic vision and his unwavering commitment to exploring complex social and political issues through the medium of cinema. Anasuya's struggle to choose between her former lover who had settled abroad and Bhrigu is highly significant. Her anguish about feeling torn between two possible homes is a powerful representation of the feelings of refugees who are often forced to choose between two homes. When she asks, "Tobe ki ami du bhaag e bhaag hoye gechi?" (Have I been split into two?), it is reminiscent of the partition that occurred suddenly and divided many families.

Anasuya's response to her inner conflict, where she acknowledges Bhrigu's suffering as he pushed her away, is an apt metaphor for the motherland's pain when its people suffer. Anasuya's conflict serves as a poignant reminder of the difficult choices that refugees are forced to make, and the deep emotional toll that such choices can have on individuals and communities. The way she recognizes that Bhrigu's decision was not easy, and that he too experienced inner turmoil, shows the empathy that is needed to understand the suffering of others.

In the final scene where Anasuya reunites with Bhrigu, it becomes clear that she has found a sense of home not in a particular country, but in the person of Bhrigu. This moment highlights the significance of family and loved ones during difficult times. Both Anasuya and Bhrigu were previously lonely and struggling with painful memories, but now they find solace in their shared past, memories, and pain. Their emotional reunion shows that even when one is forced to leave their home country, their connection to family and loved ones can provide a sense of belonging and comfort. The shared experiences and memories that Anasuya and Bhrigu have together serve as a powerful reminder of the importance of human connection and the role that it plays in shaping our sense of identity and belonging. The final scene serves as a poignant

conclusion to Anasuya's story, highlighting the resilience and strength of the human spirit, and the power of love and family to provide a sense of home even in the face of great adversity.

In his article titled *The Relentless Tragedy of Ritwik*, Partha Chatterjee explains how the film *Komal Gandhar* is kind of semi-autobiographical as Ghatak tries to portray the unwavering and pure dedication of IPTA to create a better country,

*Komal Gandhar* is a film is also a heartfelt tribute to the nation-building energies that were present in the activities of the IPTA. The IPTA was an organization of idealists who dreamed of building a contended, egalitarian India, and the film serves as a loving testament to their efforts. However, the film also acknowledges the internal sabotage that occurred within the CPI, which eventually led to the IPTA's downfall. Despite this, the film remains an inspiring celebration of the organization's purity of purpose and their unwavering dedication to creating a better India. Through its portrayal of the deep and enduring connection between mother and motherland, *Komal Gandhar* speaks to the universal human need for a sense of belonging and identity. At the same time, it reminds us of the important role that idealism and the pursuit of noble goals can play in shaping the course of a nation's history. (Chatterjee)

*Komal Gandhar* is a poignant and powerful meditation on the ideals of nation-building and the enduring human desire for a better future. It serves as a testament to the IPTA's legacy, and a reminder of the importance of striving towards a more just and egalitarian society.

### **2.3 Subarnarekha -1962**

Ritwik Ghatak's Partition trilogy culminates with this film, which notably features a prominent Dalit character. As a result, the movie not only serves as a representation of the aftermath of the partition, but also sheds light on the pervasive caste-based discrimination and marginalization prevalent in society.

The film *Subarnarekha* is set in a post-independence refugee colony in Calcutta, specifically the "Naba Jiban Colony," and follows the story of Ishwar and his sister Sita, who lost their parents during the Partition. The film begins with the abduction of a low-caste woman, whose son Abhiram is taken in by Ishwar. After securing a job at a factory in the province, Ishwar sends Abhiram away for education and Sita becomes lonely. Upon Abhiram's return, Ishwar has already arranged for his application to a German University, but Abhiram chooses to become a writer instead. Soon after, Abhiram and Sita fall in love, but Ishwar opposes their union due to caste differences. Sita and Abhiram elope, but tragedy strikes when Abhiram accidentally kills a child and is lynched by the crowd. Sita is left in a desperate situation and considers prostitution, while Ishwar contemplates suicide. However, he is persuaded by his friend Haraprasad to explore life in Calcutta, leading them to end up in a brothel. Sita discovers her brother as her first client and kills herself. The film ends with Ishwar taking in Sita's son Binu and approaching *Subarnarekha*, hiding the truth to protect his nephew's dreams.

The film *Subarnarekha* portrays political instability and the plight of displaced lives through the character of Sita, who is skillfully depicted through camera angles and character development. Sita's character serves as a symbol of the director Ghatak's emotions towards these issues and has become a timeless representation in diasporic cinema. The film also highlights the intersection of refugee politics with gender and caste-system, offering insights into the social constructs present in India today.

Sita's character in *Subarnarekha* is a poignant reflection of the complexities of identity. As a refugee, her identity is constantly in flux, intersecting with her gender and societal role. Despite the caste-based stigma, Ishwar coerces Sita into marriage, attempting to impose an identity that aligns with his social position. However, one of the film's most powerful scenes showcases Sita and Abhiram's courage as they defy the caste conflict prevalent in post-colonial India and marry each other. The issue of inter-caste relationships remains a sensitive topic in many South Asian countries, and

Sita's rebellion against societal norms challenges this notion. Despite making a bold decision to marry Abhiram, Sita was still not in control of her own identity. Society imposed a new label on her as "Abhiram's wife," stripping her of agency once again. She was relegated to the traditional roles of caring for her family and managing household chores, highlighting how her new identity was conditioned by societal norms. Sita's encounter with her brother at the brothel pushed her to take her own life, overwhelmed by guilt and shame even before Ishwar could see her. Ishwar is left to carry the burden of his sister's tragic death. The scene of Sita's lifeless body on the floor, accompanied by the haunting sounds of her last breaths and her blinking eyes, represents the devastating theme of lost homes and the impact of the partition. As a refugee woman, Sita's identity was never entirely in her control, and her search for a new home was a never-ending struggle. She lost everything and her death was the only way out of patriarchal control and a pathway to freedom. This poignant moment in the film highlights the urgency of addressing feminist issues and the plight of refugee women in society.

The character's name, Sita, is intentionally chosen to evoke a specific emotion in the film. The name has been used in *Ramayana*, where the character with the same name also face hardships and struggle for happiness. Therefore, the name Sita serves to highlight the struggle of the character in the film and draw parallels to the larger theme of societal oppression and patriarchal control. Sita's songs were a powerful medium for expressing the tragic experiences of partition, and the emotions associated with it. Her music was filled with sorrow, as she sang about the displacement of people caused by the events of partition. Sita's life, much like the lives of those affected by partition, was marked by sadness and grief, and her songs reflected this. Despite her efforts to find happiness, she was unable to escape the weight of her tragic past, and her music was a constant reminder of this.

The film effectively depicts the prevalent caste system in Bengal during the post-independence era. It portrays the struggles of lower caste people like Abhiram's mother who were forcibly evicted from the refugee colonies. After Abhiram and Sita got



married, they were forced to live in a slum with Abhiram's meager income as a bus driver, despite his education. The film also reflects the mindset of Ishwar, who, upon discovering the love between Sita and Abhiram, coerces her into marriage, arguing that their caste is what they should preserve. The film provides an insightful look into the intersectionality of caste, gender, and social status in post-colonial India. It is a powerful critique of the hierarchical caste system that continues to exist in India and other South Asian countries, which often results in the marginalization of certain communities and individuals.

Haraprasad, Ishwar's friend, labels him as a "deserter" when Ishwar seeks a new home in Chhatimpur for his sister and Abhiram. Ishwar is ridiculed for trying to find happiness and a new home, as it goes against the collective mourning and suffering that is expected of refugees. This reveals the societal pressure for refugees to conform to a shared sense of misery, and highlights how attempts to improve one's situation can be viewed as selfish.

The conclusion of the movie left me with a sense of loss and uncertainty, realizing that life can change at any moment, and we must always be prepared to start anew. The line spoken by Binu to Ishwar, "Tumi buro hole kno Mama?" (Why did you get old, uncle?), further emphasizes the transience of life. The analogy of the river Subarnarekha represents the continuity of life, which flows despite the hardships and challenges faced by individuals. In essence, the film encourages us to embrace change and move forward, just like the river, without being weighed down by the past.

### 3. Conclusion

In conclusion, Ritwik Ghatak's Partition Trilogy is a powerful and moving portrayal of the experiences of refugees who were forced to leave behind their homes, families, and communities during the Partition of India in 1947. Through his films, Ghatak offers a nuanced and complex exploration of the diasporic sentiments of the Bengali people, highlighting the struggles and challenges of maintaining cultural and linguistic identities in the face of displacement and trauma.

*Meghe Dhaka Tara* is a significant film that sheds light on the themes of displacement, exile, and the marginalization of classical, creative, and feminine principles in Indian society. Through its evocative portrayal of the trauma of partition and displacement, the film explores questions of nationality, memory, and identity, while also pushing the boundaries of Indian melodramatic tradition. Ghatak's use of melody and dissonance, close-ups, and poetic sensibility infuse the film with a haunting quality that transcends the reality of socio-political space, making it a timeless exploration of the human experience of displacement and loss. The film's relevance continues to resonate with audiences today, providing a poignant reminder of the importance of empathy, compassion, and the preservation of cultural and artistic traditions in times of upheaval and crisis. *Komal Gandhar* is a powerful cinematic exploration of the pain and trauma caused by the partition of East and West Bengal, as well as a testament to Ghatak's artistic vision and commitment to exploring complex social and political issues through the medium of cinema. The film's themes of unity, reconciliation, and the reconstruction of collective identity resonate deeply with audiences, both in India and around the world. Through his innovative use of dialect and folk music, and his incorporation of the histories of Hinduism and Islam, Ghatak is able to create a deeply resonant portrait of a people struggling to forge new connections and identities in the face of immense adversity. The film remains a significant cultural artifact and a testament to the enduring power of art to inspire empathy, compassion, and understanding in the face of trauma and displacement. *Subarnarekha* is a deeply powerful film that explores complex themes of identity, trauma, and societal norms. Through the character of Sita, Ghatak highlights the challenges faced by refugee women in post-colonial India, who were forced to navigate complex systems of patriarchy, caste, and societal expectations. Sita's rebellion against societal norms and her tragic end represent a powerful critique of the ways in which societal expectations can strip individuals of their agency and control over their own identities. The film is a

testament to Ghatak's ability to use cinema as a tool for social commentary, shining a light on the injustices faced by marginalized groups and calling for a more just and equitable society.

One of the key themes that emerges from Ghatak's films is the idea of identity and its relationship to place and belonging. The characters in his films are often torn between their memories of their homeland and their new surroundings, struggling to reconcile their sense of self with the realities of their new lives. This tension between the past and the present, between memory and experience, is at the heart of Ghatak's vision of the Bengali diaspora.

Another important theme that Ghatak explores in his films is the role of cultural traditions in shaping the experiences of the Bengali diaspora. Through his vivid portrayals of festivals, music, dance, and other cultural practices, Ghatak highlights the importance of these traditions in helping refugees to maintain a sense of continuity and connection with their pasts. At the same time, however, he also raises questions about the ways in which these traditions can be used to exclude or marginalize those who do not fit into narrow definitions of identity and belonging.

Ultimately, Ghatak's Partition Trilogy offers a poignant and powerful reminder of the human cost of displacement and forced migration. By exploring the experiences of the Bengali diaspora with sensitivity, nuance, and insight, Ghatak's films provide an important cultural artifact that not only sheds light on the past but also speaks to the ongoing struggles of refugees and displaced persons around the world today.

As we continue to grapple with the challenges of displacement, migration, and identity in the 21st century, Ghatak's films offer a valuable lens through which to understand and reflect upon these complex issues. Through his artistry and vision, Ghatak reminds us of the importance of empathy, compassion, and human connection in the face of profound loss and trauma, and encourages us to strive for a more just and equitable world in which all people are able to find a place to call 'home'.

#### Works Cited

- [1]. Chakravarty, Sumita S. *National Identity in Indian Popular Cinema, 1947-1987*. Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1998. Print.
- [2]. "Los Angeles Review of Books." *Los Angeles Review of Books*, 22 Feb. 2020, [lareviewofbooks.org/article/out-of-the-waiting-room-of-history-ritwik-ghataks-cinema-of-partition/](http://lareviewofbooks.org/article/out-of-the-waiting-room-of-history-ritwik-ghataks-cinema-of-partition/).
- [3]. Hasan, M. (1998). Memories of a Fragmented Nation: Rewriting the Histories of India's Partition. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 33(41), 2662–2668. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4407270>
- [4]. Sarkar, Jaydip, and Rupayan Mukherjee. *Partition Literature and Cinema*. Routledge India, 30 Apr. 2020. Print.
- [5]. Sinha, Rajdeep. "PARTITION through LENS-the EMERGENCE of NEW BENGALI WOMAN (SPECIAL REFERENCE of MEGHE DHAKA TARA by RITWIK GHATAK)." [www.academia.edu/5495361/PARTITION\\_THROUGH\\_LENS\\_THE\\_EMERGENCE\\_OF\\_NEW\\_BENGALI\\_WOMAN\\_SPECIAL\\_REFERENCE\\_OF\\_MEGHE\\_DHAKA\\_TARA\\_BY\\_RITWIK\\_GHATAK](http://www.academia.edu/5495361/PARTITION_THROUGH_LENS_THE_EMERGENCE_OF_NEW_BENGALI_WOMAN_SPECIAL_REFERENCE_OF_MEGHE_DHAKA_TARA_BY_RITWIK_GHATAK)
- [6]. "The Relentless Tragedy of Ritwik." *Himal Southasian*, 1 Nov. 2003, [www.himalmag.com/the-relentless-tragedy-of-ritwik/](http://www.himalmag.com/the-relentless-tragedy-of-ritwik/).