

## Female Subjectivity and Society's Suppression of Women in Aparna Sen's *Paromitar Ek Din*

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**Abstract:** The patriarchal society often tries to suppress women both physically and psychologically. This patriarchal notion sabotages women to attain their own desires and restricts women to create their individual identity. However, women are struggling to break the shackles of deceptive social norms to establish themselves as individual beings to attain their subjectivity. Aparna Sen's film *Paromitar Ek Din* explores the suppression of male centered society on three major female characters and shows Paromita's effort to attain her own subjectivity by delineating Shanaka and Khuku's failure to come out of the cocoons. This paper draws theories on female subjectivity from Julia Kristeva and V. Geeta's idea of feminism which explains the Indian counterpart of Kristeva's idea. Sen focuses on the bindings of Shanaka and Khuku which makes them subordinate to the patriarchal society and Paromita's emancipation from a subordinate to individual self. This paper aims to showcase the patriarchal repression on women where Shanaka was forced to stay as a widow till her death due to societal norms. The paper further positions Paromita as a symbol of patriarchal resistance, highlighting how her remarriage signifies a deliberate departure from the trauma of her disabled son's death and an assertion of new beginning. The significance of the work lies in the transition of woman from darkness to light, her emancipation and attainment of individuality.

**Keywords:** *Emancipation, Female Subjectivity, Patriarchy, Suppression, Transition*

**Introduction:** *Paromitar Ek Din* is an Indian Bangla film written and directed by Aparna Sen, well-known for making women-centric films. Her movies often showcase complex female characters like Paroma, Shanaka, Meenakshi, Brinda and Uma<sup>1</sup> who struggle with their circumstances in the patriarchal society and the characters tries to search for their individual identity. Sen's female characters highlight the conflict between social norms and desires and offer subtle perspectives about human relationships. Some of her famous creations include- *Paroma* (1984), *Sati* (1989), *Paromitar Ek Din* (2000) *Mr. and Mrs. Iyer* (2002), *Antaheen* (2009), *Goynar Bakso* (2013), *Arshinagar* (2015), *Sonata* (2017). *Paromitar Ek Din*, released on 08 January 2000, shows the emancipation of a woman from society's suppressed situation. The film features Rituparna Sengupta as Paromita, Aparna Sen as Shanaka, Sohini Sengupta as Khuku, Rajatava Dutta as Biru, Rajesh Sharma as Rajeev and Soumitra Chatterjee as Monironjjon Biswas.

In *Paromitar Ek Din* a middle-class housewife Paromita, along with her mother-in-law Shanaka and sister-in-law Khuku, is subjected to patriarchal oppression. Sen presents how women are condemned and held responsible for the physical condition of their children. Paromita and her mother-in-law Shanaka both have

<sup>1</sup> The mentioned characters appear in the films *Paroma*, *Paromitar Ek Din*, *Mr. and Mrs. Iyer*, *Antaheen*, and *Sati* respectively.

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given birth to physically disabled children. Shanaka's daughter, Khuku, has schizophrenia and Paromita's son Bablu is born with cerebral palsy. But patriarchal regulations often perceive the 'diseases' to be genetically transmitted from the mother, rather than as a condition that can occur to anyone. Shanaka has spent her whole life taking care of her daughter and could not attain any individuality other than that. On the other hand, Paromita's husband Biru accuses Paromita of their child's condition and tries to suppress her on that ground. Paromita, Shanaka and Khuku, all are deprived of their sexual agency and emotional fulfillment. Biru and Paromita do not have sexual compatibility, and he does not value her as well. Moreover, Biru verbally abuses her and accuses Paromita of their unhappy marriage. Like Paromita, Shanaka also endured an unhappy marriage which she silently tolerated throughout her life, she could never voice out. As an adult, Khuku has desires but her desire of getting married is denied due to her psychological condition.

Patriarchal society often considers female body as an instrument which regulates through institutions like marriage and motherhood. Female subjectivity is a perspective to see the female as an individual self. Against these backdrops, female subjectivity shows how a woman can contribute to her own identity. This paper aims to explore the suppression of women and analyze their effort to create their identity and to examine Paromita's action as a symbol of resistance against patriarchy and a pathway for attaining her subjectivity. In *Paromitar Ek Din*, Paromita tries to break the stereotype of a woman confined in her house and creates her own place in the society. Female subjectivity, in this context, tells the history of women's experience. This paper explores Paromita and Shanaka's actions in *Paromitar Ek Din* through Julia Kristeva's idea of female subjectivity. Kristeva mostly talks about western women's condition, Paromita and Shanaka and Khuku's exploitation and suppression will be seen in the eyes of V. Geetha's idea of feminism which explains the Indian counterpart of Kristeva's idea.

**Methodology:** This study adopts a qualitative approach and content analysis method to examine context and meanings within the selected primary sources of data along with relevant secondary sources of data that support multiple interpretations of the text. Data were analyzed through close reading, in-depth understanding of subjective experiences, cultural context and symbolic representations present in the material.

**Literature Review:** Both Paromita and Shanaka give birth to physically disabled children and they suffer for it. Aparna Sen delineates Paromita's transformation from a middle-class housewife to a working woman who has found her individuality. Rimli Bhattacharya in the article "Women through the Cinematic Lens of Aparna Sen" comments on Paromita and Shanaka's having disabled children by mentioning this as a "tragic story" [1] Bhattacharya also focuses on Paromita's endeavor to transform herself in *Paromitar Ek Din*. She says, "This story is tragic but also shows a ray of hope and the power of a woman who deals with her demons despite the challenges and turns to a working woman breaking from the stereotype housewife" [1]. She mentions Aparna Sen's unique manner to portray the relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. In the film, Sen shows solidarity between these two women. She illustrates how this traditionally complex relationship can turn into friendship. Woman's identity does not need to be enlightened by women neglecting the identity of others. Bhattacharya highlights "it is not necessary to portray the other sex in a lesser light or depth in order to espouse women's identity" [1].

Anuj Kumar in an interview with Aparna Sen talks about Sen's ideologies of individuals. Aparna Sen explores women's quest for individuality. The issue of individuality arises when the society or a system suppresses someone's individual choice. In the film *Paromitar Ek Din*, Paromita breaks the stereotype of society and

embarks on a journey to create her own individual identity. Creating an individual identity does not alienate her from the society. In this context, Sen says, “My real interest is the psychology of the individual. The individual herself is a part of the system, part of many converging political ideologies” [2]. In the same interview, Sen talks about female characters and their realization of their own rights. A woman can choose her life partner, and she can decide what she wants to do with her life. Sen talks about her another film *Paroma*. In the film, the protagonist Paroma makes choices based on her own desires. By giving importance to her choices Paroma can discover her identity. On this issue Aparna Sen says, “To an extent, it was about a woman discovering her own identity” [2].

Sk Abbas Uddin in his article highlights how Apnara Sen incorporates body politics as an agency to understanding motherhood as well as relationship between two women from two different generations. Motherhood imposed on woman as an agency of tolerance and restriction to their freedom based on patriarchal suppression. A woman is unable to enjoy her motherhood because society creates the identity of mother as an epitome of sacrifice. He points out, “It also challenges the notion that motherhood is an inherent source of fulfillment for women and acknowledges the multifaceted nature of maternal experiences” [3]. Sk Abbas Uddin also explores the generational emancipation of women. He says, “Shanaka, despite her adherence to traditional values, remains confined within her role as a wife and mother, denied the opportunity to pursue her aspirations. Paromita, however, challenges these restrictions and seeks autonomy in her life” [3].

Shoma A Chatterji in her article asserts that Sen admits, “I am concerned about women’s issue” [4]. Sen shows that Shanaka tolerates the suppression of patriarchy. Her husband was unable to fulfill her sexual and psychological desires, and she loves Moni da<sup>2</sup> but could never raise her voice and so maintains an unhappy marriage all her life. Paromita, on the other hand, breaks the silence. She comes out from her abusive marriage with Biru and remarries Rajiv, the person she wants to live with. As Sen asserts, “Shanaka continues to live through an unhappy marriage. Paromita doesn’t” [4].

In an interview with Maria Grazia Fala`, Sen talks about the traditional belief about the second marriage of women. She says, “It would also go against the traditional belief that a woman may marry only once in her life”. Patriarchy creates a barrier for a woman to remarry and choose a life partner of her own. Aparna Sen justifies Paromita’s second marriage not as “novelty in cultural Indian scene” but as “a common action” [5].

Sreerupa Sengupta in her article, gives voice to different points of view of male and female disability, liability of maternity and Sen’s efforts to highlight the importance of women’s desires and emotions. The suppression of patriarchy creates an extensive distinction about the disability of man and woman. Sengupta quotes, “while disabled men are seen as unfortunate and objects of pity, disabled women are held culpable for shaming their family, community and nation” [6]. Aparna Sen claims that a disabled woman can have sexual desires and other qualities like everyone, but the society refuses to recognize them. In *Paromitar Ek Din*, Sen shows Khuku’s desires as Sengupta mentions that the film “...does not ignore Khuku’s desire to be loved and her maternal quality” [6] but Sen also shows the denial of Khuku’s desires by her family members.

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<sup>2</sup> His actual name is Monironjjon Biswas, but Shanaka affectionately calls him Moni Da.

Sengupta also talks about Aparna Sen's Portrayal of marginalization of mothers for their disabled children. She says, "Sen's *Paromitar Ek Din* projects two mothers who suffer maximum marginalization because their disabled offspring make them traitors in the economy of sexual exchange where women's reproductive and mothering quality is a vital product" [6]. She also mentions Paromita's abusive marriage with Biru and how Biru accuses Paromita of their child's condition by saying that her family have "hidden genetically or sexually transmitted diseases" [6].

After reviewing these articles and interviews, I have found that not many significant research works have been done about the individuality of women and the negation of their desires by patriarchy. So, considering that research gap, I want to focus on Julia Kristeva's idea on female subjectivity, the individuality of women and desires of women as an individual to analyze Aparna Sen's *Paromitar Ek Din*.

**Theoretical Framework:** Judith Butler's idea of subject which is quoted by James Loxley in his book *Performativity* that refers to someone who is subjugated by the rules and regulations of society and becomes subordinate to it [7]. Kristeva in her book *Crisis of the European Subject* demonstrates that patriarchy creates barriers for women by means of motherhood, language and religion. According to Kristeva, the "interiority of subjectivity" [8] creates the crisis of the subject. Kristeva, considering women as a subject of patriarchy, says, "the subject is always a divided subject and always a subject of language" [8]. Kristeva points out that, "one of the main intimidations to emancipate free subjectivity of women is the incapability to enunciate her own experiences" [8]. Paromita in *Paromitar Ek Din* tries to exercise freedom and creativity through language by protesting the abusive words of her former husband and she chooses to narrate her own psyche by remarrying the person she wants.

Kristeva emphasizes "the centrality of the mother in the emergence of subjectivity" [8]. In *Paromitar Ek Din* Shanaka's denial of her desires of an individual creates obstacles for her attainment of subjectivity. Kristeva says, "mother's love for her child is an ideal but not merely an idealized virtue" [8]. As a part of taking away Khuku's subjectivity her erotic desires are usually made taboo, and she is usually seen in terms of her biological conditioning. The individual experience does not depend on labeling woman as an object of patriarchy.

Kristeva talks about the condition of women in the European society but as the paper focuses on the condition of women in the context of the Indian subcontinent, I want to relate Kristeva's idea with V. Geetha's idea of female individuality and the oppression by patriarchy.

V. Geetha in her book *Patriarchy*, discusses female individuality, sexuality, motherhood, marriage and other issues related to women's condition in the subcontinent. Motherhood, religion, marriage, sexuality become the means through which patriarchy has often exploited women. In the subcontinent, mainly in India, women are considered as a form of goddess. This excessive idealization of a mother figure forces Shanaka to sacrifice her human rights. To transform her from a non-divine to a divine being, patriarchy compels her to relate the idea of sacrifice of the goddesses for her children to the life of the women. This idealization of a mother negates the basic individual choices of women and thus subjectivity is averted by it.

About the religious dictum on women that is conditioned by patriarchy, Geetha says, "these patriarchal arrangements require, like the Brahminical model does, a control of women's reproductive capacity and her sexuality" [9]. V. Geetha further mentions, "women's sexuality, once evocative of reverence and fear, now came to be viewed as wild energy that must be carefully controlled and husbanded" [9].

Women's emancipation from gender parity and "addressing individual sensation and perceptions" make a way to achieve female subjectivity [9]. Paromita tries to emancipate from this situation and V. Geetha suggests, "...making their own intellectual and sexual choices could women actually free themselves from an oppressive social and economic system" [9].

**Findings and Discussions:** Concentrating on the situations of the female characters in *Paromitar Ek Din*, patriarchal suppression of women by means of marriage, motherhood, religion, disability and language is noticed in the name of societal regulations. As mentioned already, patriarchy exploits women and prevents them from attaining subjectivity. In the film, the notable female characters suffer physically and mentally in the hands of patriarchy, yet they also try to emancipate themselves from their captive situation, create a solidarity among themselves and eventually the protagonist Paromita attains female subjectivity by emphasizing her individuality.

**Suppression of Paromita, Shanaka and Khuku:** In *Paromitar Ek Din*, Paromita and her mother-in-law Shanaka are middle-class housewives living in Kolkata. Both have been a victim of abusive marriages. Shanaka's husband never really cared about her needs and desires as a human being. Her husband cannot even tolerate that Shanaka enjoys television instead of making food for him. He taunts her by saying "I have told you to stop watching these rubbish" [10]; and he forces Paromita to switch off the tv that Shanaka was watching and Paromita's husband walking on his father's footprints abuses Paromita on different psychological levels. Contrarily, Paromita liberates herself from her abusive marriage with Biru. Although Shanaka had feelings for Moni Da, she stayed in her unhappy marriage until the death of her husband. Paromita and Shanaka both have children who were born with different kinds of disabilities. Paromita's son dies afterwards but Shanaka spends twenty-five years of her life taking care of her schizophrenic daughter Khuku. Khuku's sexual and mental desires are neglected by her family members. When Khuku desires to be a bride by seeing Paromita, Shanaka with uttermost grief says "You can never be a bride, never, can you understand? Never" [10]. As a mother of schizophrenic daughter, Shanaka knows the society will never allow her daughter to get married. Her family members know that she has schizophrenia which is a serious psychological condition that requires special treatment, but they treat her just as a *pagol*<sup>3</sup>. In the very first night of Biru and Paromita, Paromita asks him about Khuku's condition. Biru replies with frowning eyes and taunting voice "Have you not realized till now or you are just pretending to be ignorant? Her brain does not work, she is mad, understood?" [10].

The film starts with the funeral scene of Shanaka. In this scene, Biru's *kakima*<sup>4</sup> asks about Paromita and at this moment the camera focuses on Paromita. The film is narrated in Paromita's flashbacks while she was attending Shanaka's funeral. Paromita remembers that her husband Biru has made his home uncomfortable for her the very beginning of their marriage. Biru taunts Paromita for being from South Kolkata. He said, "You are a girl from *South Calcutta*. It is an entirely different world" [10]<sup>5</sup>. He puts Paromita in an uncomfortable situation at the very beginning of their marriage so that Paromita cannot exercise her individual desires, and it becomes difficult for her to attain subjectivity. Biru neglects her mental and physical desires. On the first night, Biru drinks alcohol, comes home late and finds Paromita asleep. Instead of feeling sorry he says, "oh, God! You have already fallen asleep? Change the habit, I am usually late everyday" [10]. Biru tells Paromita to change her very basic human habits like eating, sleeping, talking for him. At this moment Biru and Paromita are both shown through a mirror reflection and the mirror frames them in such a way that it seems Paromita is confined. Biru is foregrounded in the frame and the camera focuses on him. One can question his dominating nature by this. Even

<sup>3</sup> Pagol is the Bengali word for mad or lunatic

<sup>4</sup> She is Biru's aunt. Kakima is a Bangla kinship term for paternal aunt.

on the first night after their marriage, Biru does not think it is important to ask for Paromita's consent about initiating sexual intercourse with her; he rather prioritizes his desire. Paromita writes poetry but Biru never appreciates that. Biru never showed any interest in Paromita's likes and dislikes rather he always cares about his own issues. He accuses Paromita regarding their relationship that "You are getting cold day by day" [10] and eventually he cheats on Paromita. Paromita's creativity and desires are negated by her husband and there is no mutual understanding in their conjugal life. Shanaka mentions their relationship to Paromita is, "you only stay so many days because of Bablu only, you and Biru does not have any kind of bond" [10].

Similarly, Paromita's mother-in-law has faced similar problems in her conjugal life but she considers this as the fate of women. By the process of interrogation of being a good housewife and a mother of a disabled daughter, society makes Shanaka as an object of the society. She was never happy in her conjugal life, but she thinks that if the marriage does not work well, there is no way out for a woman. A woman must sacrifice her individuality for the sake of saving her marriage. She says, "I got no peace for a single day after my marriage. My brothers treat me like a queen in my parents' house and in in-laws house I become a maid servant" [10]. When Paromita decides to leave the house, Shanaka regrets her own relationship with her husband and tells Paromita that, "Think about my situation. I never had any real connection with your father-in-law, still we passed so many years together, brought so many children into the world. And do you think all marriages end up being happy! No, they don't" [10]. She is talking about her absolute lack of opportunity to attain any kind of subjectivity. Shanaka accepts her failure of attaining subjectivity as her fate. Her husband cannot fulfil her physical and mental desires. In one of the scenes, Shanaka's husband falls asleep while Shanaka gets ready for him. The lights dim out and the camera focuses on the outside of the window and Shanaka stands alone in the frame as it projects her loneliness. Moreover, Shanaka's husband and her son indicate in an offending manner about her relationship with Moni Da. Her husband with a very scornful tone tells her "Here, he comes! Go, go downstairs" [10]. When Paromita claims Moni da as a distant cousin of Shanaka, Biru negates that by saying, "Listen, Biswas can be never be a brother or a husband of a Bhramin girl, he comes frequently when father goes on tours" [10]. Despite all this Shanaka never tries to get rid of the abusive marriage. She tells Paromita that as a woman it is Paromita's fate to have an abusive marriage and Paromita should continue this marriage. Nevertheless, Shanaka comments about Biru and Paromita's marriage that, "In a couple of months I understood that they have no connection. So? So what? So many years have gone by. Isn't it?" [10]. Shanaka's failure of attaining subjectivity refers to the history of women's subjugation to Patriarchy. For Shanaka, no marriage can be perfect, but it is only the women's duty to maintain her marriage. She tells Paromita to continue the history of subjugation. Shanaka seeks to pass down the inherited struggle of women's unrealized subjectivity across generations.

Patriarchy uses motherhood to suppress women. A woman's identity is closely associated with her reproductive abilities. Paromita and Shanaka have children with disabilities. Biru's suppression of Paromita becomes more visible when she gives birth to a boy with cerebral palsy. Though a disease or a condition can be genetically transmitted from both the father and the mother, Paromita's husband blames it exclusively on her and questions the medical history of her family. Biru accuses Paromita by saying that, "I should have investigated your family history before getting married. Who knows what invisible illness of the previous generations can bring about such conditions?" [10]. Biru abuses Paromita physically and mentally for their child's disabled condition. Paromita suffers because of the over expectations from a mother. The condition of Paromita is closely

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<sup>5</sup> Since the movie is in Bangla, dialogues are delivered in Bangla. All the quoted dialogues are translated by the author. South Calcutta is italicized because Biru emphasized that word and uses mockingly.

associated with V. Geeta's idea of considering a "woman as a form of goddess" [9] to subjugate her with greater responsibilities. Additionally, the other family members, except Shanaka and Khuku, consider Paromita responsible for her child's disability. Even, Paromita's father-in-law scorns Shanaka for choosing Paromita as their son's wife. Paromita faced all the accusations because she is the mother. In the name of motherhood society chains Paromita with greater responsibility of her children.

Shanaka undergoes the same suppression as Paromita does. As Shanaka has given birth to a schizophrenic daughter, her daughter becomes her responsibility for twenty-five years. Shanaka reflects on her circumstances with lament and describes how the responsibility of her daughter becomes a significant barrier to the fulfilment of her individual desires. Shanaka regretfully says that "As if I don't need anything more in life. Just feeding, cleaning, dressing, doing hair this mad girl for twenty-five years and that is it. I do not go out, not even to cinemas. My desires have been killed within these four walls" [10]. Mothers often take primary responsibility for raising their children. In this scene, the camera deliberately frames the spatial positioning of three central female characters, Paromita, Shanaka and Khuku. Khuku is at the front of the frame while Paromita and Shanaka occupy the background position. Perhaps, this visual arrangement, along with the camera's focus on Khuku's reaction, draws attention to the emotional and psychological tension among the characters. The claustrophobic setting and the women's position serves as a visual metaphor for the suppression they experience. Through fulfilling the socially prescribed duties of motherhood, Shanaka cannot consider herself as an individual human being anymore. In the context, motherhood emerges not as a source of empowerment, but as a significant impediment to both Shanaka and Paromita's pursuit of subjectivity and selfhood.

Both Paromita and Shanaka are suppressed by society's constructed rules and regulations in the name of religious rituals. In *Paromitar Ek Din*, Paromita's decision of remarriage has been marked as a sin by others. In Shanaka's funeral, the other members of family talk about Paromita's remarriage as a matter of fulfilling Paromita's lust. They are gossiping about Paromita's job and remarriage by saying "Her husband is calling her frequently, it happens! If married twice there are lots of loving words to make that work" [10]. Not only remarriage but also widowhood is politicized by patriarchy with the help of certain religious norms. When the family members hear about the death of Shanaka's husband, the camera blurs Shanaka and then gradually zooms her face while she is eating fish and wearing a red and white sharee. Shanaka cannot eat fish or meat after her husband's death. She must wear a white clothing as a system of perpetual mourning. Patriarchy forces a widow to live like a dead person because of the death of her husband. Such representation underscores the ways in which patriarchal structures construct and limit Shanaka's subjectivity.

In our society, disability stigmatizes any human being as abnormal. Khuku's suppression is based on her being schizophrenic. Physical and mental disabilities create challenges and become a threat for her to attain individuality. She has schizophrenia but her family members consider her as abnormal. Despite her schizophrenia, Khuku has profound senses and desires. At the very beginning of the film, she dresses up like a bride and wants to get married. Her family members categorically negate her desires. Khuku urges her biological needs and, she says to Biru, "brother, mother says I can never be a bride". Khuku also mentions several times "I have brain illness. That's why I do not let mother sleep at night" [10]. Her mother Shanaka, who herself is a victim of patriarchy, uses the language of patriarchy to define Khuku's condition. Shanaka considers Khuku as a burden because the former one had to sacrifice all her desires for her daughter since other family members do not show any concern about her. Everyone accuses Shanaka for Khuku's medicines. Biru asks Khuku "Mother didn't give you medicine today? How can you forget to give her medicine" [10]. At the funeral of Shanaka they finally say, "Now mother is dead, we will have to do something about Khuku" [10] but these

words do not show any care or concern for Khuku, they just want to get rid of their responsibilities towards her. Khuku has motherly qualities as she affectionately feeds Bablu but her all good qualities are negated because of her psychological condition. Khuku is the one who takes care of Shanaka when Shanaka is on her deathbed. Khuku is suppressed by patriarchy for being a schizophrenic woman.

**Attaining Subjectivity:** Subjectivity refers to the recognition of an individual as an autonomous and self-aware agent. In *Paromitar Ek Din* Paromita raises her voice against the established code of behavior for women and actively breaks away from such repressive norms imposed by the patriarchal society. She eventually emancipates herself from her abusive marriage with Biru and remarries Rajiv. Paromita draws on Shanaka's support to assert her subjectivity. Paromita and Shanaka create a solidarity between themselves to establish their individuality and it helps Paromita to attain subjectivity.

Paromita fights for her emancipation from the abusive marriage with Biru and she stands for her individuality. After they come to know about their child's illness, Paromita expects emotional support from Biru. She cries and says, "How can I tolerate this as a mother, but Bablu does not have any fault" [10]. Biru does not show any empathy towards her, and he yells at Paromita by saying "This is hell. Then whose fault is this? Show me any kind of defect of mine. I should have checked before marriage. How can I know what diseases are hidden in your family" [10]? Biru negates Paromita's desires as an individual and Paromita starts to feel the uneasy burden of subjugation from the beginning of their marriage, but Paromita finally raises her voice when Biru accuses her family. When Biru accuses that her family is the reason for their child's condition, she says "Be careful! Never bring such vile allegations on my family" [10]. She does not have any other identity except that of one-word housewife of *Shannyal* family. Paromita breaks down this tradition of being someone else's surrogate self and takes a job in an advertisement agency where she is known by her own name. Like Virginia Woolf mentions the concept of "Angel in the house" [11] in her essay "Professions for Women" at some point, Paromita understands that she will have to kill the angel in herself, and eventually she starts to take care of her own feelings and nurtures her individuality. She frees herself from the binding of an abusive marriage and marries the person who values her.

Female subjectivity explores how a woman perceives herself as an autonomous individual human, how she sees her life and critically reflects on the situations she faces that shapes her life. The notion is poignantly illustrated in *Paromitar Ek Din* where, at Shanaka's funeral, Paromita recalls her emancipation from an abusive marriage, her empowerment as an individual subject and the crucial support she received from Shanaka. Paromita's journey is narrated in flashbacks. The film's camera work establishes a fluid connection between past and present in such a way that it enables the audience to capture the emotional and societal landscape. For example, Paromita's act of vomiting during the funeral suggests her pregnancy which suddenly triggers a flashback to the past when Paromita's first son was born. This temporal shift opens an opportunity to explore how Paromita and Shanaka suffered in the past. Through this recollection, the audiences witness how Paromita and Shanaka endure emotional and societal hardships. Shanaka single-handedly takes the responsibility of her schizophrenic daughter. Importantly, Shanaka incorporates two apparent contradictory roles. On one hand, she speaks in the language of patriarchy and thereby contributes to suppress women, on the other hand she extends solidarity with Paromita and helps her to attain subjectivity. She says to own daughter that "Khuku can never be a bride" [10] and suggests Paromita, "Marriage need not always end in happiness" [10]. She also helps Paromita when Biru was accusing her of their child's condition. She scorns Biru, "Why are you blaming her? Aren't you seeing Khuku at your own home?" [10]. She starts to fulfill her long-suppressed desires with the help of Paromita after her husband's death. Together, they go shopping, watch films in theatre, fly kites, play cards and even choose a

meal of fish fry. According to patriarchal norms such activities seemed inappropriate for a widow, who is expected to lead a life of restraint and renunciation. By engaging themselves in these activities, Paromita and Shanaka challenge the norms of patriarchy. However, Shanaka is unable to raise her voice to reject the system. When Paromita informs her that she intends to divorce Biru and marry Rajiv, Shanaka protests, not because she wants Paromita to be with Biru, but she does not want Paromita to leave the household. She says, “Why do you want to leave the house? What problems are you having in this house?” [10]. For Shanaka, Paromita’s existence in the house is what matters not Paromita’s relationship with Biru. In this scene, the camera contrasts a strong metaphor for Shanaka’s internal conflict. She is framed in her four-poster bed, symbolizing entrapment, while Paromita is outside the bed frame and in front, signaling to attain her subjectivity. Initially, the camera blurs Paromita as she is beyond confinement and then it focuses solely on Shanaka. At this point, Shanaka creates the obstacles for herself to attain subjectivity because she was dependent on Paromita for being an individual self rather than cultivating it independently. She pleads, “Wait Paro<sup>6</sup>, do not leave. Do whatever you want, but just do not leave the house. At least you have your office, friends. I do not have anyone except that mad girl” [10]. This confession reveals that Shanaka has never envisioned herself as an independent individual who can live her life according to her own terms. Kristeva’s idea of subjectivity refers to her own experiences and how she overcomes with the help of her own experiences. Kristeva mentions, “one of the main intimidations to emancipate free subjectivity of women is the incapability to enunciate her own experiences” [8]. Paromita draws on her experiences of *Shannayal* House to construct and assert her subjectivity.

Within patriarchal discourse, idealization of mother is another barrier for women to achieve subjectivity. Women are often defined through their biological roles. The film illustrates this through Paromita’s experience. For instance, Biru blames Paromita for their child’s condition as if it is only Paromita’s duty to give birth to a healthy child. He says, “In my family, nobody is born as a handicapped, I should have taken your whole family to doctor to check if there is any hidden disease” [10]. Paromita protests such suppression by saying, “I do not know if anyone in my family suffers from such condition and even if it happens that is a tragedy not someone’s fault” [10]. She reclaims her subjectivity by framing motherhood as a personal choice rather than an imposed duty. When Paromita’s husband asks Paromita for a second child, Paromita refuses. Paromita’s refusal to her husband for another child makes her an individual subject who can talk for herself. Paromita not only stands for her rights but also the dignity and subjectivity for Shanaka. When Biru makes derogatory remarks about his mother in relation to her menopause, Paromita challenges his attitude. Menopause is a very natural condition of the female body, but patriarchy considers talking about menstruation or menopause as a taboo. Paromita considers Shanaka as an individual human being and says, “Just because she is elderly does that mean she has no biological need!” [10].

Regarding this, language plays an important role for women to attain individuality. Paromita writes poems expressing her feelings and desires which Biru wants to suppress. Shanaka and Moni praise Paromita’s writings and Paromita gets her job in the advertisement agency for her creativity. Paromita breaks the language pattern that patriarchy controls and writes to establish her own individuality as a human being. She also selects the title of Rajiv’s film ‘Padakkhep’ [10]. It means taking steps or the first step towards something as we can relate this with Paromita’s steps to attain subjectivity. Through her creative language Paromita establishes her existence not only as a mother and housewife but also as an individual subject.

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<sup>6</sup> Shanaka affectionately calls Paromita as Paro.

Female subjectivity can be attained when a woman thinks of herself as an individual human being. In Shanaka's funeral Paromita reflects on how she has struggled against the norms of patriarchy. As an individual human being a woman can choose her own life partner. If a woman wants divorce from her husband, it becomes a big taboo. Shanaka asks her after hearing about their divorce, "Biru asks for divorce?" [10]. Under the patriarchal norms it is not usual for a woman to seek divorce. Paromita replies to Shanaka in a bold voice "No, I did! Biru and I have lost the last bond we shared after our child's death" [10]. But Paromita raises her voice against the patriarchal norms and seeks divorce from her husband. She becomes vocal in asserting her own identity. Her journey from self-alienation to self-identification helps her to become an individual human being and helps her to attain subjectivity.

**Paromita's Transformation:** Aparna Sen shows both suppression of women and the way to emancipate from it. She shows both the patriarchal voice and the subjective voice through the male and female characters. Paromita's ex-husband Biru and Shanaka's husband are the representatives of patriarchy. On the other hand, Shanaka and Moni are the victims of suppression. Paromita's second husband Rajiv is a foil to Moni. Moni could never stand for Shanaka and their love, but Rajiv does, and Rajiv considers Paromita as an individual human being. That helps Paromita to attain subjectivity.

Sen portrays Rajiv as Moni's foil. Shanaka was ready to leave everything for him, but Moni did not have the courage to fight for Shanaka. When Paromita decides to leave the house, Shanaka says, "Moni da was such a coward! If Moni Da had asked me once, I would have left my home, husband, children and followed him without even looking back. But could he make himself to ask me! Could he master the courage! He could not, no one can" [10]. Moni was chained by social norms, and he did not have the courage to fight for his own love. Moni always thinks what the society will say and what is right or wrong according to the society. This is how he subjugated Shanaka and she became an object of patriarchy. On the other hand, Rajiv cares for Paromita's individuality. He gives Paromita the strength to fight for her own rights and individuality.

The film starts with the funeral of Shanaka and ends with the hope of Paromita's having another child. This indicates the journey of a woman from dark to light, her emancipation and attainment of subjectivity. The transition from death to life represents the journey of a woman from a subordinate to an individual subject.

**Conclusion:** The preceding writing showcases how Aparna Sen exhibits patriarchal suppression of women in *Paromitar Ek Din*. Through a detailed analysis, it becomes evident that Patriarchy suppresses women by controlling them with restrictive social norms. Paromita, Shanaka and Khuku - each becomes a victim of various forms of patriarchal oppression. However, Paromita ultimately emancipates herself from her condition and attains individuality. Sen focuses on the ways in which Paromita transforms herself from a subordinate human being to an individual subject. By prioritizing her own self rather than social norms, a woman can attain subjectivity. This study explores the ways in which Paromita attains subjectivity and how female subjectivity co-relates with women's emancipation. The research has further opened avenues for a deeper engagement with Aparna Sen's cinematic oeuvre and her nuanced depiction of everyday gendered experiences. Additionally, it provides a new critical lens through which the reader or audience can understand the complexities of female subjectivity in contemporary south Asian cinema. It is hoped that this will serve as a reference for future researchers who are interested in examining the representations of subjectivity and gender in visual narratives.

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