

“A Weaker Sex”: Negotiating Grief and Identity through Ghosh’s Canon

Debasmita Chakraborty & Sharanya Das Ghosh, Postgraduate student, MSc. Clinical Psychology, School of Psychological Sciences, CHRIST University YPR, Bengaluru, India.

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Oscillating in the pendulum of identity and responsibility, characters in Rituporno Ghosh’s filmography grow in grief. Challenging the discourse of heteronormative ideas of gender in the contemporary middle class in films like “Dahan”, “Bariwali”, or “Chokher Bali”, Ghosh brings to light how identity emerges through dejection and desolation. Rituparno's collection of work, which has earned national and international recognition, raises the same question Matt Walsh asks: “What is a woman? Separate the duties and interpersonal, imaginary, and mythical associations of a mother, daughter, sister and wife, dream girl, and goddess and what do you have? Can she exist without them?” The prevalence of the male counterparts in the women’s lives takes a central role in the tragedies of her identity. In domesticity and the mundane, violence takes shape passively in moral hypocrisies and power differences. Ghosh’s characters defy the silent screams of their circumstances, turning their sorrow into an exploration of human resilience. Employing a social constructivist framework, this study utilizes content analysis to explore the interplay of Ghosh’s cinematic portrayal of domesticity, grief rituals, and gender-based emotional violence. The analysis reveals that Ghosh’s films serve as a dialogue between societal expectations and the hidden traumas that shape women's identities. This study underscores the importance of re-evaluating traditional gender roles and the portrayal of women in cinema. Providing a nuanced understanding of the complexities of Ghosh’s characters contributes to the fields of gender studies and film theory.

Keywords: grief, identity, gender, emotional violence.