Unlike the prevalent views of the past ages, films are no longer considered merely means of entertainment. In the postmodern era with the disappearance of the distinction between high and low culture, elite and popular culture, film is no more an art form which should maintain a long distance from the table of scholarly discussion. With the post-structuralist move from ‘work’ to ‘text’, film is as important a cultural text of our generation as any other art form like literature, painting etc. We can’t also ignore the interdisciplinary nature of art. Besides, as Corinn Columpar suggests, “Cinema’s birth at the end of the nineteenth century additionally bound its history up with that of other fields of knowledge (for example, anthropology and psychoanalysis), political institutions (for example, colonialism), and social discourses (for example, biological racism and the cult of domesticity) . . .”.

Throughout the cultural history of the world beginning from its birth at the end of the nineteenth century, films, in most of the cases, have been used as a tool, as an ideological state apparatus by the authority to secure the internal consent of the masses. Its potentiality to challenge the power-structure has always been neglected by the mainstream cinema. But, along with the mainstream cinema in the centre, there has always been a flow of contrapuntal parallel cinema on the margin, somewhat neglected and not given due importance. Some revolutionary directors have used this potential medium as a site to decolonise the screen, as means of social change. Cinema, being a collective world, a ‘public sphere’, can offer a dialogic worldview, polyphonic in nature, instead of presenting a monologic authorial ‘chronotope’.

Hence, Rituparno Ghosh, one of Bengal’s most successful filmmakers, whose films bear a close connection with the scholarly world of literature and art, and who in an iconoclastic move desires to decolonize the screen, has been chosen for this research project. The study will try to posit Ghosh’s films from the vantage point of postmodernism and postcolonialism. It will be observed how Ghosh questions India’s modernity, its colonial legacy and hegemonic nature. Rewriting the Western version of modernity and also resisting the prevalence of cultural colonialism in the decolonised state, Ghosh provides a more egalitarian view of a postmodern society. He tries to recover those voices of gendered and sexual subalterns which have either been silenced or marginalised in the vast enterprise of nation-building. Rejecting a parochial nationalism of authentic Indianess, he provides a post-national worldview.

In the introduction, the rationale and the objective of the study will be presented in detail. Next the discussion will move towards the presentation of theoretical frameworks upon which the research will be built. It will be shown why and how postmodern and postcolonial philosophy are relevant to the study of Ghosh’s films. In the introductory chapter an attempt will also be made to locate Ghosh in the genre of Bengali film industry and how his philosophy and
aesthetics differ from his predecessors and brings a change in the industry, the legacy of Ghosh is being carried forward by the present-day film-makers. After that a literature review will be presented to map the attempt which has been made by different scholars to study Ghosh’s film-texts from different scholarly angles. Finally, the chapter division will be given to show how the study desires to move towards the conclusion with the aim of substantiating the hypothesis or the objective.

The first chapter will cast a sarcastic glance at the grand narratives of society, which were given birth by European Enlightenment and modernity and were transported to the colonies like India. Indian modernity which was colonially mediated, was of course elitist and patriarchal. Ghosh questions this bourgeoisie modernity which suppressed the causes of the gendered and sexual subalterns, like many other minority groups. Following the postmodernist philosophers like Lyotard and Foucault, Ghosh’s film texts are marked by a critical incredulity towards the erstwhile grand narratives of home, family, womanhood, marriage, identity, selfhood, gender, sexuality etc.. In a Foucauldian move, he shows how discourses of modernity are artificially created to serve the purpose of the powerful patriarchy.

The next chapter will deal with the cultural colonialism which has survived the demise of the Empire and Ghosh’s resistance to that. The Indian leaders and reformers were so much interpellated by the discourses of the colonisers that they tried to build a modern India from the perspective of the West. Ghosh throws back a return gaze towards those colonial ideologies which the patriarchy has retained even after the reformation and decolonisation, to have its sway in the newly formed state in a neo-colonial guise. Ghosh also shows, how India’s postcolonial politics is mired by the discourses of colonialism. In this respect, Ghosh critiques hypermasculinity which the Indian nationalist leaders had glorified in their anti-colonial struggle to build an authentic India with martial power and which is still celebrated in opposition with feminine vulnerability. Ghosh sarcastically negates all those colonial discourses and asks for a reformulation of India’s postcolonial politics.

The third chapter will analyse how Ghosh’s attempt to queer the screen. Critiquing the colonial ideologies regarding gender and sexuality, he provides a queer interpretation of human subjectivity. The idea of a stable gender or sexual identity is a construction of Western modernity and this myth is further validated by the hegemony of heterosexuality which is viewed compulsory in binary opposition with homosexuality. This idea of gender and sexuality along with the Victorian moral prudence was transported to India by the colonisers and legalised through IPC. Questioning this hegemonic construction, Ghosh celebrates gender ambivalence and sexual plurality. In this context it would also be shown how Ghosh in person, besides through his films, became a queer icon to flout the colonial modern interpretation of identity.

The next chapter would deal with Ghosh’s post-national worldview. It will be shown how Ghosh critiques the very notion of nationalism which is a Western construct. While nation is thought to be an “imagined community”, it significantly ignores the presence of the gendered and sexual subalterns in the state. Critiquing its masculine hegemony, Ghosh views nationalism from a broader perspective, beyond any discrimination of gender and sex. Instead of a gendered nation, demarcated by the dialectics of the home and the world, Ghosh conceives of a global village. His postcolonial politics, while questions the colonial hegemony of the West in the independent state, at the same time, discards the third world cultural nationalism of authentic
Indianness. Beyond the parochial nationalism, his films expose a cultural ambiguity which according to Ashish Nandy is India’s postcolonial worldview.

The fifth chapter will discuss the metafictional nature of Ghosh’s film-texts and the narrative games played by him to expose the fictionality of any kind of narrative, especially the grand-narratives. Many of his films like Khela, Abahoman, Bariwali, Aarekti Premer Galpo etc. take film-making as a subject and dramatize it, thus exposing the artificiality of its construction. Ghosh’s historiographic metafictions like Chitrangada, Abahoman, Aarekti Premer Galpo etc. re-examine an existent text, turning it inside out, detecting gaps, erasures, ideologies, incessantly teasing readers out of the complacent reading. Ghosh’s historiographic metafictional films assume the interrogative rhetoric of the postmodern and the politicised stance of the postcolonial in their attempt to rewrite the native history of colonial interpretation. They expose the constructed nature of native subjectivity, mediated by colonial ideologies. Ghosh looks for the reconsideration of the representation of the gendered and sexual subalterns in history and culture.

Finally, in the conclusion, the entire discussion will be summarised to substantiate the title of the thesis and its hypothesis. Here, it will also be shown how far has Ghosh succeeded to decolonise the screen, how his legacy is being carried forward by the other film-makers and where does he fall short to provide a utopia for the dispossessed.

**Working Bibliography**

**Primary sources:**


Secondary sources:


In the late twentieth century, Hollywood cinema made a series of excursions into postmodernism and its effects on subjectivity. Scholarship on Hollywood’s ventures into this territory has, historically, focused on the representation of the cyborg in the science fiction films of the 1980s and 1990s and the destabilisation of the “human” that this figure engenders. This thesis argues that, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, some indie/alternative Indiewood films exhibited a similar tendency to explore postmodern subjectivity through experimenting with the representational conventions of the class. Addressing postmodern social theory that emphasizes the social role of knowledge, this book abandons the disciplinary boundaries separating the sciences and the humanities. Contributors include well-known theorists in the varied fields of sociology, anthropology, women’s and gay studies, philosophy, and history. From the Back Cover. New Perspectives On Social Theory: The Postmodern Turn gathers together in one volume some of the most important statements of the Postmodern approach to human studies. In addressing Postmodern social theory and emphasizing the social role of knowledge, this book...