

## HUMANITIES INSTITUTE

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# THE MARRIED WOMAN / Parineeta (1953)

Bimal Roy

## OVERVIEW

**Auteur** Bimal Roy (b. 1909 – d. 1966) was an Indian film director whose films won awards at national and international film festivals. He strived to realistically reflect the life and times in newly independent India in his artisan films. As an admirer of Bengali writers and literature, many of his films were based on famous literary works. In 1953, he directed two films based on Bengali literature. The first one was *Two Acres of Land (Do Bigha Zamin)*, based on Rabindranath Tagore's poem. The second one was *The Married Woman (Parineeta)*, based on Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay's novel of the same name.

**Film** As suggested by the film's title, the film explores different facets of matrimony and its impact on women. The film's large cast of named and unnamed female characters, including Lalitha, Bhubaneshwari, Manorama, and Annu, shed light on a woman's life at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century amidst the flummox of social and cultural changes inspired by Bengal Renaissance. The film is a faithful adaptation of the novel's original plot with minor changes. Although Sarat Chandra's Lalitha was a thirteen-year-old, the Lalitha in the film is much older, reflecting the evolved social customs around the marriage age. Since the novel's original publication in 1914, the novel has been translated into many languages, including English. Across many of his novels, Chattopadhyay's female characters are notable for their outspoken courage and resilience in the face of social injustices based on class, gender, and caste. Lalitha in *The Married Woman* is a perfect example.

**Background** The film's cast contributed to the film's overall success. Ashok Kumar (Shekar in *The Married Woman*) was an already established talent in the film industry. Although Meena Kumari (Lalitha in *The Married Woman*) was a relatively fresh-faced actress, she had great potential and showed signs of her future stardom. Meena Kumari's collaboration with Bimal Roy resulted in three award-winning films. For her role as Lalitha in *Parineeta*, Meena Kumari bagged Filmfare's Best Actress Award. In the same year of *The Married Woman*, she also had a guest role in *Two Acres of Land*. Alongside her acting career, she was also an Urdu poet who wrote under the pen name "Naaz."

After Roy's first film adaptation, there were many more film adaptations in other Indian languages. The most recent adaptation was also named *Parineeta* and released in 2005. Actors Saif Ali Khan and Vidya Balan performed lead roles in the 2005 version. Actress Vidya Balan won the 51<sup>st</sup> Filmfare Awards' Best Female Debut for her performance of Lalitha. The multiple adaptations attest to the timelessness of the characters and themes addressed in Chattopadhyay's original novel and Roy's first film adaptation.

## MAIN CHARACTERS

### Lalitha's family

Lalitha	The female protagonist; a caring and kind young woman
Gurucharan	Lalitha's uncle, her mother's brother
Mami (Aunt)	Gurucharan's wife, who hands over all the household chores to Lalitha
Annakali or Annu	One of Gurucharan's five daughters, who is close to Lalitha
Malati	Gurucharan's daughter, who gets married to Girin

### Shekar's Family

Shekar	The male protagonist, who is Lalitha's love interest
Navin Rai	Shekar's father, who is greedy, and schemes after Gurucharan's home
Bhubaneshwari	Shekar's mother; a high-born woman who is close to both Shekar and Lalitha
Avinash	Shekar's older brother and Navin Rai's first born
Mr. Choudhary	A wealthy man, who hopes to gain Shekar as a son-in-law

### Girin's family

Girin	The second male lead; Lalitha's friend and admirer
Charu	Lalitha's childhood best friend; Girin's niece
Madhav	Charu's father, a good-humored man who cares about Girin, like his own son.
Manorama	Charu's mother and Girin's older sister

### PLOT

#### LOAN

**The pending loan** Gurucharan had mortgaged his home to take a loan from Navin Rai at the time of his eldest daughter's wedding. Navin Rai summons Gurucharan and asks him to return the loan with interest. An alarmed Gurucharan begs for more time. Magnanimously, Navin Rai agrees and grants him a three month-extension.

In a later scene, Navin Rai explains to his eldest son, Avinash, that he had always known that Gurucharan would default on the loaned money. So, he had intentionally lent the money to acquire Gurucharan's property in exchange for the overdue loan. He planned to demolish Gurucharan's crumbling ancestral home and build a house for his second son, Shekar.



**Girin: A new friend** When Lalitha goes to her friend Charu's house to play cards, she meets Girin, who is Charu's maternal uncle. Madhav, Charu's father introduces Lalitha to Girin. Girin is attracted to Lalitha and finds chances to interact more with her. Unfortunately, Girin's and Lalitha's budding friendship becomes a point of contention between Shekar and Lalitha. Shekar takes to harshly rebuking Lalitha for playing cards at Charu's house.



**Girin offers to pay the loan** As Girin and Gurucharan's friendship develops, Gurucharan shares his worries with Girin. From his sister, Manorama, Girin learns the details of the loan and the mortgage held by Navin Rai. Moved by Gurucharan's plight, Girin offers to lend the entire sum of three thousand rupees, interest-free and mortgage-free. An overwhelmed Gurucharan accepts immediately and promises never to forget Girin's big favor.



**A repaid loan** At the end of the three-month due date, Gurucharan shows up with the owed sum in full on the due date surprising Navin Rai and his assembled guests, who are waiting to witness Gurucharan's shameful downfall. However, when Navin Rai and the others demand to know the name of the generous benefactor, Gurucharan declines to reveal the name, as per Girin's wishes.



## SHEKAR AND LALITHA

**Shekar and Lalitha** The film's opening scene shows Shekar and Lalitha's close relationship, their affection and ease resulting from years of connection between Navin Rai's and Gurucharan's families. Shekar helps with Lalitha's education and checks her reading and writing. Shekar's mother, Bhubaneshwari, considers Lalitha a daughter and invites her over often.



**A marital arrangement for Shekar** Navin Rai begins talks with a wealthy man, Mr. Choudhary, to set up a marital arrangement between his second son, Shekar, and Mr. Choudhary's daughter. However, before the arrangement is finalized, Navin Rai is called in by his wife, Bhubaneshwari. She reasons that young people should choose their spouse. Although she could not dissuade her husband, she managed to buy more time for Shekar. Initially, Shekar wanted to reject the marriage proposal because he had no interest in acquiring a wealthy marital connection. However, his mother's advice moves him to defer his final decision until after meeting the bride.



**Lalitha's marital prospects** Having dealt with the loan, Gurucharan turns his attention to Lalitha's marriage. Once again, he shares his worries with Girin. Since Lalitha's parents are dead, she does not have a sizeable dowry that attracts prospective grooms in Indian society. As a poor man with five daughters of his own, Gurucharan finds himself hard-pressed to secure a good match for Lalitha. So, Gurucharan asks Girin to introduce eligible men from among Girin's friends who will be open-minded to accept a well-mannered girl from a poor family.



**Shekar's jealousy after Theatre trip and Travel plans** When Girin sponsors Charu's family trip to a theatre performance, Lalitha is also invited. She initially agrees to join them. However, Shekar expresses displeasure at Lalitha's friendship with Girin. He accuses her of neglecting her studies. Therefore, she decides to decline their invitation at the last moment. Girin misses Lalitha and drops by Gurucharan's house to ask after her. Following this visit, Girin becomes good friends with Lalitha's uncle, Gurucharan.

When Bhubaneshwari decides to travel to Mandipur, she decides to take Lalitha along. However, the groom visits scheduled by Girin fall on the same week. Therefore, Gurucharan requests Lalitha to cancel her travel plans with Bhubaneshwari and stay home. When Shekar hears about the sudden cancelation, he arrives at Gurucharan's house to ask after Lalitha. Seeing Girin's ease with Gurucharan and assistance with Lalitha's groom-hunting displeases Shekar.



**The Garland Exchange** Lalitha becomes anxious and tries to ease Shekar's annoyance. Lalitha happens on a flower garland leftover from one of Annu's wedding roleplay games. Still worried about Shekar's earlier displeasure, she playfully tosses it around Shekar's neck to lighten the mood. He accepts the garland and reminds her that exchanging flower garlands signifies a wedding ceremony in Hindu custom. In all seriousness, he completes the ceremony by placing the same garland around Lalitha's neck. She is initially alarmed by the sudden serious turn and says, "I am not worthy of you." Shekar dismisses her objection saying, "today I realized that I cannot live without you." Finally, she accepts Shekar's proposal and promises to wait till the time their wedding can be announced openly.



**Shekar's misunderstanding and jealousy** Soon after, Shekar leaves for Mandipur with his mother, Bhubaneshwari. Back in Calcutta, Girin invites Gurucharan's family to stay at his country house in Mangur for the sake of Gurucharan's poor health. Lalitha is worried about the move and steals longing glances at the now-dried flower garland that signifies her marriage to Shekar. She pens a letter to Shekar explaining the travel plans. Navin Rai disapproves of Lalitha's closeness with his family. He intercepts and destroys the letter, leading to a miscommunication between the lovers.

When Shekar returns from Mandipur, he learns from Bhubaneshwari that Gurucharan's family is moving to Girin's house in Mangur. Shekar is led to believe that Lalitha has decided to marry Girin. Despite Girin's lower caste background, Bhubaneshwari explains that his education and riches make him a good match for Lalitha. Concluding that Girin must be Gurucharan's unnamed benefactor, he misunderstands the nature of the agreement between Gurucharan and Girin.

Back in Calcutta, Shekar is unable to forget Lalitha. Looking around his room, he is overcome by visions of Lalitha, remembering her previous visits and their friendly banters. However, when he hears about the marital arrangement between Girin and Lalitha, he gives up hope and consents to marry into the Choudhary family.



**The Lovers part** When Lalitha comes to bid goodbye, Shekar is stern-faced and refuses to show affection. He refers to the money Girin has lent to Gurucharan, and accusingly says, “from what I’ve heard, your uncle has sold you to borrow money from Girin.” Unaware that Shekar did not receive her explanatory letter, Lalitha is distressed by Shekar’s coldness. As a worried Lalitha travels to Mangur, the street beggar who regularly receives alms from Lalitha is seen singing a song about Radha and Krishna’s love and their tragic parting. His song signifies Shekar and Lalitha’s tragic parting, fueled by deep misunderstanding.



**Arrival in Mangur** Gurucharan’s family is happy and ecstatic about staying at Girin’s big, well-furnished house in Mangur. The move away from the city does wonders for Gurucharan’s mental and physical health. However, Lalitha grows anxious and wants to return to Calcutta soon. Girin picks up on Lalitha’s unhappiness and asks about her well-being. Unwilling to voice her worries over the misunderstanding with Shekar, Lalitha chooses to be vague and dismissive.

**Gurucharan’s Final Wish** When a letter from Calcutta informs Gurucharan about Navin Rai’s declining health and sudden death, he is shocked into illness. On his deathbed, he remembers Lalitha’s good nature and her care for him and his family. So, Gurucharan arranges a marriage between Girin and Lalitha to secure Lalitha’s future with an honorable and kind man.





### **Re-arranged Marriages**

Because of the wedding ceremony she completed with Shekar, Lalitha rejects the marriage arrangement her uncle Gurucharan set up with Girin. She requests Girin's help to break the marital arrangement, explaining that she is already married. When Girin asks for her husband's name, she replies, "a married woman never utters her husband's name, because it is disrespectful." She asks Girin to keep her marriage a secret. Girin fears breaking his promise made to a dying man. So, he marries Gurucharan's daughter, Malati, and fulfills part of his promise to take care of Gurucharan's family in the future. Meanwhile, the family receives a letter from Calcutta inviting them to Shekar's upcoming nuptials.



### **Shekar discovers the truth**

Girin, his wife Malati, and Lalitha travel to Calcutta to attend Shekar's wedding and sell their ancestral house. When Shekar sees Lalitha again, their conversation is awkward because of the unresolved misunderstandings. While Shekar assumes that Lalitha is married to Girin, Lalitha assumes that Shekar has renounced his marriage to her in consenting to marry into the Choudhary family. Girin wishes to have a private word with Shekar and hands him a letter from his mother-in-law, Gurucharan's wife. When Girin explains that he is married to Malati and not to Lalitha, Shekar's misunderstanding is clarified. Girin concludes that Lalitha's mystery husband must be Shekar from Shekar's horrified facial expression upon learning the truth.



### **Shekar and Lalitha get together again**

Shekar immediately goes in search of Lalitha to fix everything. He brings her back to his mother, introducing Lalitha as Bhubaneshwari's daughter-in-law. With one week to go, Shekar requests his mother to call off the wedding to Mr. Choudhary's daughter. Bhubaneshwari agrees and accepts Lalitha as her daughter-in-law. Finally, Shekar and Lalitha reach their happily ever after.



### **CHARACTER ANALYSIS**

**LALITHA** Lalitha is the female protagonist. After her parents' death, she lives with her maternal uncle Gurucharan and his family in the city of Calcutta. During her stay at Gurucharan's house, she became friendly with two neighboring households: Navin Rai's and Madhav's. At Navin Rai's house, she won Bhubaneshwari's and Shekar's care and affection, whom she called "mother" and "elder brother" respectfully. Together, the mother-son duo took responsibility for Lalitha's education and character development. At Madhav's house, she gained a playmate in Madhav's daughter, Charu.

*Grateful* Lalitha feels deeply grateful to her uncle's family for their willingness to take her in. She does not mind her aunt's occasional harshness and all the household chores she is assigned at home. Furthermore, her gratitude also extends to Bhubaneshwari and Shekar for their concerted efforts to educate her and instill moral values. She expresses her gratitude by deferring to their wishes, even when they clash with her own wants.

*Humble* Despite Lalitha's close connection with the well-off Rai family, she never used her status to lord it over others in her social and familial circle. She is always attuned to her uncle's woes and did her best to lessen his worries. Lalitha was quick to extend patience and understanding towards her irascible aunt, who was burdened by household chores and the family's poverty.

**SHEKAR** Shekar is the male protagonist and Lalitha's love interest in the film. He is Navin Rai's and Bhubaneshwari's second son and a lawyer. He has known and liked Lalitha since childhood leading to his romantic interest and desire to marry her. In contrast to his father's obsession with wealth and class status, Shekar values moral and ethical principles. Moreover, he takes after his mother's disposition. Therefore, he chose Lalitha as his wife rather than wealthy Mr. Chaudhry's daughter.

*Assertive* As an economically and socially privileged man, Shekar is naturally confident about his abilities and assertive in expressing his ideas. Like Mr. Knightley in Jane Austen's *Emma*, he

indulges Lalitha's playfulness while exerting his influence to fix perceived character flaws in Lalitha. When Shekar hears about Lalitha's plan to join Charu's family and Girin for their theatre trip, he criticizes Lalitha's lack of attention to her studies. His rebuke caused Lalitha to back out at the last minute.

*Jealous* Girin's arrival and infatuation with Lalitha provoke jealousy in Shekar. Even after they exchange garlands and Lalitha promises to wait till their official wedding ceremony, Shekar's jealousy makes him misunderstand and cold-shoulder Lalitha.

**GIRIN** Girin is Charu's uncle and Manorama's younger brother. He is a fresh graduate and stays at his sister's house to spend time with family. From his first meeting with Lalitha, he develops an infatuation and strives to help Lalitha and her family to his best. He enjoys a close relationship with his brother-in-law, Madhav and Lalitha's uncle, Gurucharan, looking up to them as respected elders.

*Generous* As a young man from a wealthy background, he is aware of his privilege but does not flaunt it in front of others. He also does not hesitate to use it to help those in need. When he hears about Gurucharan's overdue loan and the threat to his ancestral home, he immediately volunteers to lend the money, interest-free and mortgage-free. Concerned about Gurucharan's declining health, he offers to help the family move to his countryside home in Mangur to improve Gurucharan's health.

*Faithful* Girin is a man of his word and feels strongly about helping those around him. When his promise to marry Lalitha and take care of Gurucharan's family conflicted with Lalitha's rejection of the marital arrangement, he found a way to resolve the conflict. His desire to respect both Gurucharan's and Lalitha's wishes leads him to marry Gurucharan's daughter, Malati. It allows him to keep his promise while also respecting Lalitha's wishes.

**GURUCHARAN** Gurucharan is a hardworking man with five daughters. The salary from his government job barely helps cover the daily expenses of his large household. He frequently experiences depression as a result of his family's poverty and low standing among upper-caste peers. His wife takes out her frustrations by nagging him.

*Anxious* In many scenes, Gurucharan displays his anxiety and worries about others' perception of him and his family's poverty. In the opening scenes, he worries about the overdue loan owed to Navin Rai. After Girin's help paying the money back, he still worries about his remaining four daughters' marriages and Lalitha's marriage. He openly discusses his woes with Lalitha and Girin, inviting their sympathy and goodwill.

**NAVIN RAI** Navin Rai is Gurucharan's wealthy neighbor. Their houses share a rooftop patio, allowing easy movement between the two families. He is looking for ways to expand his family's wealth and social influence. He is often seen among social peers, boasting about his potential connection with the wealthy Choudhary family and his plan to outsmart Gurucharan.

*Shrewd* Navin Rai's cunning is evident in his scheme to seize Gurucharan's ancestral house next door. He knew all along that Gurucharan would mortgage his ancestral house to get a loan. From his understanding of Gurucharan's financial situation, he knew that Gurucharan would inevitably default on the loans. Therefore, he decided to lend the money to Gurucharan to claim the mortgaged house in the end.

*Family man* Beneath his calculating and cunning exterior, Navin Rai also harbored a deep devotion to his family. He wants Gurucharan's house because he plans to build a house for his second son, Shekar, on the grounds. Navin Rai hoped to have his sons close by in his old age. Therefore, his schemes were driven by misplaced paternal affection.

**BHUBANESHWARI** Bhubaneswari is Navin Rai's wife and the mother of Avinash and Shekar. She is a soft-spoken and pleasant woman. Her attentive care for her daughter-in-law defies stereotypical mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relationships. Furthermore, she cares deeply about Lalitha and includes her in family plans.

*Progressive* Although Bhubaneshwari is mindful of social rules and norms dictating proper behavior for a married woman, she is also a liberal-minded woman. When Navin Rai arbitrarily fixes Shekar's marriage, she argues for letting the children choose their own partners. She believes that times have changed and that parents should care about their children's happiness rather than just their material well-being.

*Patient* As Navin Rai's wife, Bhubaneshwari, is keenly aware of her husband's follies. However, as a devoted wife, she tolerates his harmful schemes while patiently trying her best to diffuse them and not harm others. When she presses Navin Rai regarding the Gurucharan's overdue loan and Shekar's wedding alliance, he orders her to take a trip to Mandipur to shake off her influence.

**MADHAV** Madhav is Gurucharan's neighbor and Girin's brother-in-law. He is a perceptive man who chooses to enjoy life. He differs sharply from Navin Rai's and Gurucharan's approaches to life and dealing with problems. Although he is aware of his own family's lower caste status among his neighbors, he moves with dignity and never self-deprecates.

*Jovial* Compared to the more serious Navin Rai and Gurucharan, Madhav is witty and jovial among friends and family. He enjoys teasing his wife, Manorama, for her willfulness and indulges her out of love. As the man of the house, he never exerts his patriarchal will on his wife and daughters and sets an inspiring example for Girin.

*Caring* Although he is not related to Girin by blood, he unhesitatingly takes Girin under his wing. When Girin needs an elder's advice, Madhav always makes time and takes Girin's concerns seriously. Madhav is the first one to notice Girin's infatuation. Although he reminds Girin about the caste difference and stigma attached to lower castes, he does not dissuade Girin's attraction to Lalitha.

**ANNU or ANNAKALI** Annu is one of Gurucharan's daughters and is close to Lalitha. She is the only child character with significant screen space and speaking lines. Her childhood innocence shows a different perspective on the serious events in the story. When Shekar and Lalitha need a buffer during misgivings, Annu becomes their faithful messenger.

*Intuitive* Annu is keenly aware of her family's poverty and the resulting lower social standing. In an earlier scene, she complains about the unpaid school fees and the bullying she experiences among her peers.

*Imaginative* Annu is a highly imaginative child, which is evident in the games she devises. As a pre-teen immersed in her parents' worries over their daughters' marital prospects, she projects the same into her games. For example, she organizes elaborate wedding ceremonies for her dolls and invites friends and family. Her careful consideration of social conditions surrounding marital alliances and attention to detail in matters such as preparations, expenses, and the auspicious hour, reveals an unconscious attempt to solve the same problems plaguing her parents.

## THEMES

**Appearance v. Reality** Misunderstandings emerge between Lalitha, Shekar, and Girin due to their family members' deliberate and unintended meddling. When Lalitha is invited to join Charu's family for their trip to the theatre, it gives Shekar an incorrect impression of Lalitha's affection for Girin. The niggling suspicion is aggravated when Girin lends a large sum to Gurucharan. Out of obligation, Gurucharan follows Girin's suggestions leading to the unintended effect of curtailing Lalitha's connection with Shekar and Bhubaneshwari. Although Lalitha is forced to follow her uncle's wishes, Shekar assumes that Lalitha has chosen to break connections with him. Additionally, Girin's financial assistance and his help finding a groom for Lalitha are mistakenly joined together. Rumors that Gurucharan traded Lalitha for the money to repay the overdue loan cause Shekar to assume that Lalitha does not love him anymore. When the lovers are distanced by travel, Navin Rai intercepts and destroys Lalitha's letter to Shekar, leading to a gap in communication. Under a wrong assumption, Shekar consents to marry Mr. Choudhary's daughter.

Shekar's upcoming nuptials, coupled with his earlier visit to the Choudhary family house, cause Lalitha to wrongly conclude that Shekar has abandoned her. Although Girin was attracted to Lalitha, he did not press his proposal when Lalitha rejected him. Furthermore, he redeemed himself by clarifying Shekar's misunderstandings and catalyzing the film's move toward a happy ending.

**Class** The three families' socioeconomic class is a key theme in the film. Since Navin Rai's family is both upper-caste and upper-class, they hold the most social power and influence among the three families. Although Gurucharan's family is upper-caste, they are poor. Therefore, Gurucharan feels inferior to his peers. On the other hand, although Girin belongs to a lower caste, his family is affluent. It is demonstrated in Girin's ability to lend a large sum of money, interest-free and mortgage-free, to Gurucharan. His wealth and Lalitha's poverty allow him to entertain the possibility of winning her hand in marriage.

**Caste** Although caste is not a central theme in this film, the significance of the caste system in Indian society is acknowledged. When Bhubaneshwari informs Shekar about Lalitha's marriage to Girin, she mentions the caste difference between Lalitha and Girin. While Gurucharan and Navin Rai are upper-caste brahmins, Girin and Madhav belong to the lower-caste. When Girin expresses an interest in Lalitha, Madhav reminds him of the caste difference between himself and Lalitha. He not unkindly points out that Brahmins tend to treat lower castes as Untouchables. Beyond these casual observations, there are no deliberate caste discriminations in the interactions between Gurucharan's upper-caste family and Madhav's lower-caste family.

**Generational gap** The film demonstrates a generational gap between two generations. The youngsters think, decide, and act differently from their parents. While Navin Rai is calculating and greedy, his sons, Avinash and Shekar, are level-headed and noble in their attitudes toward their neighbors. When Navin Rai wanted to press Gurucharan for loan repayment, Avinash leaned towards relaxing the terms of loan repayment. Navin Rai sought a marital alliance with the Choudhary family because they promised a big dowry for their daughter. The same reason that excited Navin Rai was displeasing to Shekar. His visit to the Choudhary house, seeing their wealth displayed at their palatial house and the bejeweled bride put him off the alliance. A generational gap is also evident between Gurucharan and Lalitha. Her resourcefulness and steadfastness contrast with her uncle's excessive anxiety and tendency to spend beyond his means.

**Love** The film explores the contours of romantic love and its expressions in the three youngsters. The romantic love between Shekar and Lalitha emerges organically, resulting from years of friendship and growing up together. Their mutual affection causes them to long for each other's company and experience jealousy on certain occasions. When Shekar visits the Choudhary family home, Lalitha becomes jealous and envies Mr. Choudhary's daughter for her wealth and social status, which matches Shekar's. Similarly, Girin's closeness with Gurucharan's family and his obvious infatuation with Lalitha are sources of envy and jealousy for Shekar. On the other hand, Girin's attraction to Lalitha is an example of love at first sight, an infatuation could not break the strong bond that already existed between Shekar and Lalitha.

**Marriage** The film highlights facets of marriage in Indian society. Since all three households have young people of marriageable age, weddings and marriage take precedence in this film. The older generation leans towards arranged marriages defining marriage as a social contract between families to gain economic and social resources or to establish inter-familial connections. Navin Rai arranges for his second son, Shekar, to marry into the Choudhary family. Similarly, Gurucharan arranges for Lalitha to marry Girin to ensure financial security in her future. Nevertheless, the younger generation opts for love marriages. They choose their partners based on mutual affection and love. As a result, Shekar and Lalitha break their arranged matches and get married to each other.

**Wedding** A 2022 study in *The Economist* reported that the business of conducting weddings is within the top ten most lucrative businesses in India. This 1953 film emphasizes the business and economic drive behind Indian marriages. The cultural fixation on marriages overflows into the wedding ceremony and dowry. A dowry refers to the assets (gold, jewels, land, or money) a bride's family

gives the groom's family as part of a marital agreement. There is a lot of pressure on the bride's family to provide large dowries. The social value of a lavish wedding and a large dowry is emphasized in many scenes. It forced Gurucharan to borrow beyond his means for his eldest daughter's wedding and the harsh consequences are portrayed in the film. During marriage talks between Navin Rai and Mr. Choudhary, the wedding ceremony and dowry are discussed in exhaustive detail. Boasting that a previous wedding in the family had cost ten thousand rupees, Mr. Choudhary promises to spend fifty thousand rupees for a son-in-law like Shekar. Therefore, when Gurucharan discusses Lalitha's marital prospects with Girin, he is worried about his poverty and Lalitha's lack of dowry. The grown-ups' fixation with marriage spills over into the children's world. In several scenes, Lalitha's younger cousin, Annu, is seen staging her dolls' weddings.

**Patriarchy** The film affords a close look at embedded patriarchal norms dictating the inner lives and domestic spaces within all three families. All the men and boys are educated and gainfully employed, whereas the women and girls undergo informally schooling at home and are restricted to household chores. As an orphaned girl with no independent wealth or career, Lalitha is pushed and pulled between Gurucharan, Shekar, and Girin. When Lalitha wanted to join Bhubaneshwari on her trip to Mandipur, Girin interjected with potential groom visits to persuade Gurucharan to necessitate Lalitha's stay in Calcutta. Despite her anxiety about moving away from Shekar amidst growing misunderstandings, Gurucharan's insistence about moving with Girin to Mangur forces Lalitha to comply with the move.

The film demonstrates that class status does not lessen the patriarchal influence on women's lives. Choudhary's daughter, introduced as a bride to Shekar, is unnamed throughout the film. She is bedecked in jewelry and is forced to appear docile in front of prospective grooms and their families. Despite Bhubaneshwari's upper-caste status, she is powerless among menfolk within her family. She is forced to comply with her husband's and sons' wishes. Since she disapproved of the marital alliance with the Choudhary family, Navin Rai forced her to take a trip to Mandipur and quit meddling in his plans. Although Bhubaneshwari wishes to stay back in Calcutta, her son Avinash sides with his father in persuading his mother rather than listening to her wishes.

Furthermore, the film highlights the pressure placed on wives within marriages. After the secretive wedding ceremony, Lalitha already considers herself Shekar's wife. Therefore, she rejects the marriage arrangement with Girin planned by her uncle. Because a wife is expected to honor and obey her husband, she does not even dare to utter Shekar's name aloud. On the other hand, Shekar does not feel obliged by his secretive wedding ceremony. When he hears rumors about Girin's and Lalitha's marital arrangement, he moves on and consents to get married into the Choudhary family. The film's close attention to Lalitha's character and life allows viewers a close look at the effects of patriarchy within marriage.