

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE  
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## BIMAL ROY (1909-1966)

### Life

Bimal Roy was an Indian filmmaker remembered as the “Silent Master of Indian Cinema” for his quiet but firm presence giving form to Indian cinema. He was born into a Bengali family in the village of Suapur in the Dhaka district of present-day Bangladesh, which was part of British India at that time. His father was a tenant farmer under a local landowner. Following his father’s death, Bimal Roy, his widowed mother, and his infant brother were forced out of their land. He moved to Calcutta as a young man and began working on the sidelines of the film industry. However, his dedication and passion for film-making earned him a big name and success in his career, lasting three decades. He worked with many prominent actors, actresses, producers, and music directors of his time. They all respectfully addressed him, ‘Bimal da,’ meaning they respected him as an ‘elder brother.’ In 1966, at the age of 56, he passed away, leaving an unforgettable mark on Indian cinema.

In his early days, Bimal Roy worked as a photographer. He transferred his skills as a photographer to his career as a film director and producer. In an essay, award-winning director Shyam Benegal wrote, “Bimal Roy’s works stand out for their photography. He took great care to reveal the light source and introduced a sense of time. More importantly, it connected one to reality.” Although Bimal Roy started his career in Calcutta, he relocated to Bombay at the invitation of Bombay Talkies. One of his reasons was the political instability in Calcutta caused by the Partition of India and Pakistan and the resulting tensions between East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and West Pakistan (now Pakistan).



(Bimal Roy, center, on set)

Bimal Roy was married to Manobina Roy, and they have four children: Rinki Roy, Yashodhara Roy, Aparajita Sinha, and Joy Roy. His daughter, Rinki Roy, wrote a memoir in Bimal Roy's honor, titled *Bimal Roy: A Man of Silence*. Her second book, *Bimal Roy's Madhumati: Untold Stories from Behind the Scenes* (2014), memorializes the filmmaker's efforts behind his award-winning film, *Madhumati* (1958). She is also the founder and chairperson of the Bimal Roy Memorial & Film Society. The society aims to keep the filmmaker's legacy alive and to recognize future filmmakers following in Roy's footsteps. Taking after his grandfather, Bimal Roy's grandson, Aditya Bhattacharya, is also an award-winning film director.

## Legacy

Although Bimal Roy passed away in 1966, his legacy and contributions to Indian cinema remain alive and remembered in many ways. The Indian government, coordinating with the postal department, released 50 commemorative stamps celebrating principal figures who contributed to early Indian cinema, one of whom was Bimal Roy. He is also remembered through the Bimal Roy Trophy, which recognizes veteran filmmakers and promising new talents in the film industry and celebrates the spirit and talent that Roy embodied in his art.

The people who had worked with Bimal Roy in various capacities continue to reminisce about their interactions with the filmmaker in glowing terms. The award-winning lyricist Gulzar lauded Bimal's focused dedication to film-making in his memoir *Actually...I Met Them*. Gulzar noted that, as one of the earliest



*Dulhania Le Jayenge*) in 1995.

filmmakers to use soundscapes, Bimal Roy captured all sounds, even barking dogs and ringing bells, to recreate each scene authentically. Hrishikesh Mukherjee, an award-winning filmmaker, recalled Bimal Roy's humility from his first meeting with the director. Although Roy was already an established figure in the Indian Cinema, he extended kindness and humility to all his colleagues, unmindful of their rank and position. Stalwart actor Dilip Kumar, who acted in Bimal Roy's films (*Devdas*, *Jew (Yahudi)*, and *Madhumati*), discussed his experiences working with the talented director. He recalled Roy's quiet yet firm communication style that successfully motivated actors. He described Bimal Roy as "the quietest man on set," despite his position as a film director.

Many of Bimal Roy's films were so popular that subsequent generations of filmmakers adapted their plots. Examples include *Devdas* and *The Married Woman (Parineeta)*. Bimal Roy's *Madhumati* won 9 out of 12 award nominations at the 6<sup>th</sup> Filmfare awards. For more than 30 years, *Madhumati's* winning streak remained undisputed until *The Big-Hearted Will Take the Bride (Dilwale*



(right to left: Dilip Kumar, Meena Kumari, and Bimal Roy holding Filmfare awards; figure on far right unidentified)

## FILMOGRAPHY

- 1945 – *Towards the Light/Companion (Udayer Pathey/Hamrahi)*
- 1948 – *Anjagarh*
- 1949 – *Mantramugdha*
- 1950 – *First Man (Pahela Aadmi)*
- 1952 – *Mother (Maa)*
- 1953 – *Two Acres of Land (Do Bigha Zamin)*
- 1953 – *The Married Woman (Parineeta)*
- 1954 – *Father and Daughter (Baap Beti)*
- 1954 – *Biraj Bahu*
- 1955 – *Devdas*
- 1955 – *Job (Naukri)*
- 1958 – *Madhumati*
- 1958 – *The Jew (Yahudi)*
- 1959 – *Sujata*
- 1960 – *A Test (Parakh)*
- 1961 – *Immortal Stupa*
- 1962 – *The Love Letter (Prem Patra)*
- 1963 – *Bandini*

## THEMES

Bimal Roy's humble origins attune him to the human condition and inspire him to capture social realism in his films. Furthermore, political and sociocultural changes shaping postcolonial India and their impact on people are recurring themes in Roy's films. He pays particular attention to the darker sides of poverty, class struggle, corruption, urbanization, and unemployment. Roy's films maintain an incredible balance between entertainment and realism. He addresses many social evils, such as casteism and classism, while retaining the entertainment value of an enjoyable film experience. Bimal Roy strives to reflect the struggles of common people in his films, such as *Two Acres of Land (Do Bigha Zamin)*, *Sujatha*, and *The Married Woman (Parineeta)*. He believes in the power of love and explores many kinds of love and

affection in his films. In *Jew (Yahudi)*, *Bandini*, and *Madhumati*, he explores the power of romantic love by contrasting it with the odds that couples face and overcome together. Familial love between parents and children is also a recurring theme in many of his films.

## 1. Poverty

Bimal Roy's early exposure to poverty when he first arrived in Calcutta inspires him to revisit the lives of ordinary folks in many of his films. He describes the different shapes and forms of poverty and its devastation in *Two Acres of Land*, *Job*, and *Parineeta*.

*Two Acres of Land* In *Two Acres of Land*, poverty is an overarching theme that defines the lives of farmers affected by years of drought and famine. The Mahetos are among the many farmers who experienced hard times. The immediate crisis is an overdue loan threatening the loss of their ancestral land. The father and son of the family move to Calcutta to earn enough money to repay the loan. As poor, illiterate individuals, they find minimum-wage jobs and meet more misfortunes in the city. They deny themselves daily essentials, such as sturdy footwear, and simple pleasures, such as ice creams, to save more money. Despite the family members' hard work, the loan remains unpaid. Ultimately, the Mahetos lose their land and livelihood. In *Two Acres of Land*, Bimal Roy explores the impact of natural disasters and manmade forces, such as modernization and urbanization, on farmers' livelihoods.

*Job (Naukri)* In *Job*, the father's death and the resulting loss in income signals the beginning of the family's misfortunes and emphasizes their poverty. Although the son, Ratan Kumar, is college educated, he struggles to find a job in the big city of Calcutta because of the nationwide crisis in employment. Ratan Kumar and his friends mirror the lives of many young people whose families took loans to invest in a college education only to be disappointed by the labor crisis. The family's poverty also caused Usha's death because timely medical care was beyond their means. Her death in the film shows how poverty takes people's lives.

*Married Woman (Parineeta)* In *Married Woman*, Bimal Roy explored the social stigma that haunts poor people. Poverty and desperation cause Gurucharan to borrow beyond his means for his daughter's wedding. He almost loses his ancestral home because of the debt. Although Girin helps Gurucharan by lending him money without interest, it comes with obligations. Gurucharan feels pressured to heed Girin's ideas in family decisions. Furthermore, poverty constantly strains Gurucharan's family members and makes them feel inferior to their neighbors and community members.

## 2. Romantic love

Romantic love is a recurring theme in most Bimal Roy films. He portrayed romantic love as a vital force that empowers two young people to overcome incredible odds and accomplish mighty feats. Romantic love takes different forms when fighting against social discrimination, rigid cultural laws, and loopholes in legal and political institutions.

*Married Woman (Parineeta)* The love triangle between Shekar, Lalitha, and Girin shapes the plot. Although Shekar and Lalitha were childhood sweethearts, they had to overcome many obstacles that tested the strength of their love and devotion. They encounter misunderstandings, jealous spites, and family interventions before reaching their happy ending. Their obvious difference in socio-economic class, because of Shekar's wealthy background and Lalitha's poverty, poses a challenge despite the two families' equally high-caste status. Furthermore, Girin's friendship and romantic interest in Lalitha complicates Shekar's and Lalitha's love and creates a misunderstanding. Although Girin eagerly pursues Lalitha initially, he backs away upon realizing Lalitha's devotion to Shekar and even plays a significant role in reconciling the lovers.

*Job (Naukri)* In *Job*, the romantic love between Ratan and Seema becomes a source of strength and support to them both. When the outside world's pressures and family obligations press against them, they stick together for comfort and find solutions. As a newly arrived job seeker, Ratan feels alienated and alone in the big city of Calcutta, and Seema becomes his family and supporter. When Ratan loses his job and is despondent, Seema again saves him from the brink of suicide. Likewise, Ratan's love empowers Seema to exercise her will in marriage despite the pressure from her parents.

She courageously travels from Calcutta to Bombay to meet Ratan. Her faith in their love motivates her to choose happiness over obligations to her parents and community.

*The Jew (Yahudi)* Romantic love in *The Jew* is the solution to interreligious differences, tearing apart two communities. The two lovers, Marcus and Hannah, represent opposing communities. Marcus is a Roman, a prince of the realm, in line for the throne as the next Roman emperor. Hannah is a Jewess and the only daughter of her beloved father. After hopelessly falling in love, they realize the impossibility of love between a Roman and a Jew. When others learn about their forbidden love, Marcus and Hannah face death threats from both communities. In the face of these threats, they express their devotion by doing everything in their power to save each other from their community's anger. In this film, Bimal Roy used Marcus and Hannah's romantic love to shed light on the ugliness perpetuated by Roman-Jewish enmity. Their love made the two communities confront the consequences of their cruelty and hatred.

*Madhumati* In *Madhumati*, romantic love between Anand and Madhumati is powerful enough to follow two people into their rebirth and reverse the injustices of their past life. Despite the social chasm between Anand, an educated urbane young man, and Madhumati, a tribal young woman, they fall in love. Their contrasts cement their budding love into a strong force that even death cannot defeat. When the film's villain, Ugra Narayan, murders Madhumati and tries to hide the evidence, Anand refuses to let it go. His love resurrects Madhumati's ghost, and together they help the police arrest Ugra Narayan. However, the story does not end there. Anand and Madhumati are reborn as Devendra and Radha, who marry and are blessed with a child.

### 3. Paternal affection

Many fathers in Bimal Roy's movies present a brave and kind persona that openly demonstrates deep affection for their children. Consequently, they play an instrumental role in shaping their children's character and temperament.

*Two Acres of Land* This film captures the lives of three men belonging to three generations, and paternal affection runs deep. As the family's patriarch, Gangu Maheto teaches his son and grandson the importance of devotion to one's family and ancestors. He practices what he preaches in his determination not to burden his family. When he is too sick to go on, Gangu remains silent despite physical discomforts and hides the extent of his illness. When the father and son duo, Shambhu and Kanihya Maheto, move to Calcutta to earn money, Shambhu replicates the model of fatherhood that his father, Gangu, had demonstrated. He compromises his comforts to take care of Kanihya and save more money for the family. When Kanihya is hard-pressed by poverty and gives in to the lure of easy money achieved through pickpocketing, Shambhu takes it upon himself to ensure that Kanihya remains on the right path.

*Married Woman* Gurucharan, Navin Rai, and Madhav display different styles of paternal affection in *Married Woman*. While Gurucharan is the figure of kindness and displays gentle understanding towards Lalitha and his children, Madhav mixes affection with empathy to guide Girin. When Girin talks to Madhav about his romantic interest in Lalitha, a young woman from an upper-caste, Madhav supports Girin's courageous and honest love but gently reminds him about the potential difficulties their love will face. Unlike Gurucharan and Madhav, Navin Rai's steely resolve underpins paternal affection. Overconfident in his plans to ensure his sons' future well-being, he makes plans that force their compliance instead of making room for his sons' wishes.

*The Jew (Yahudi)* In *The Jew*, paternal affection is a quality common to all fathers. Despite their religious differences, the Roman father, Brutus, and the Jewish father, Ezra, show fierce love toward their children. Examples of the fathers' affection become evident when the children face death threats. Ezra is unhesitant in discarding pride and dignity to beg for his son's life and save him from Brutus' cruel death sentence. He displays a similar devotion toward Hannah, his adopted daughter. When Ezra learns about Hannah's lover's Roman identity, he fears for Hannah's well-being and courageously steps up to Marcus to protect Hannah. When his daughter is kidnapped, grief and desperation turn Brutus into a maniac. He orders persecution and punishments on the Jewish community out of anger and a need for



revenge. When Ezra confides that he knows Lydia's whereabouts, Brutus is ready to beg on his knees in front of his enemy and agree to any of Ezra's conditions.

#### 4. Revenge

As an unavoidable aspect of the human condition, plotting and revenge-taking are present in some of Bimal Roy's films. His take on revenge drove home the message that revenge is possible, but at a terrible cost to self, as demonstrated by Brutus and Ezra in *The Jew* and Anand and Madhumati in *Madhumati*.

*The Jew (Yahudi)* Since the film takes a closer look at the Roman oppression of the Jews, the enmity between the two communities and efforts to take revenge are critical events in the plot. The story focuses on two fathers, the Roman Brutus and the Jewish Ezra, to highlight their revenge's harmful impact on their families. When Brutus sentences Ezra's son, Elijah, to death, Ezra kidnaps Brutus' daughter in revenge. Although Ezra loved Brutus' daughter like his own, he also never forgot that she was Brutus' daughter. When Brutus sentences Ezra and Hannah to death because of their Jewish identity, Ezra exacts his revenge on Brutus by revealing that Hannah is Lydia, his long-lost daughter. In revealing the truth, he forces Brutus to kill his own flesh and blood. Inevitably, Brutus realized that revenge sanctioned self-harm.

*Madhumati* In *Madhumati*, Bimal Roy drew paranormal activity into the plot to demonstrate justice in the form of revenge. The film's villain, Ugra Narayan, abducts Madhumati out of his selfish desire and causes her death. Despite his wealth and power, he could not escape Anand's suspicions and enmity. Spurred by his love for Madhumati, Anand persists in getting a confession from Ugra Narayan. Anand's persistence also inspires Madhumati's ghost to appear and participate in Anand's scheme to get revenge on Ugra Narayan and to correct the injustice.

#### 5. Classes

Since Bimal Roy aimed to reflect people's real lives in his times, he paid close attention to social stratification structures, such as socio-economic class. Alongside class, the films also acknowledge the entrenched caste system in South Asian society. In dramatizing the class system, Roy also highlighted the reorganization of social classes amidst political and cultural changes in newly independent nations. As a result, an ever-growing gap between the haves and the have-nots results in mounting tensions.

*Two Acres of Land* In *Two Acres of Land*, Bimal Roy explored classism in two different settings: the village and the city. In the village, traditional farmers like Shambhu Maheto struggled to survive the hard times brought on by the droughts and famines of previous years. Many farmers borrowed money from the local landlords (*zamindar*) by leveraging their lands. Over time, they lost their lands and became landless tenant farmers under locally powerful landlords. Facing the threat of losing their ancestral property, Shambhu and his son, Kanihya, move to the city to earn quick money to save their land. Since they are poor and illiterate with no marketable skills, they become daily wage laborers in the big city. Their poverty and lack of resources cling to them from village to city, and they cannot shake off their low status. In the city, the affluent middle and upper classes overshadow them.

*Married Woman (Parineeta)* In *Married Woman*, Bimal Roy explored the subtle connections between class and caste through three families who are neighbors. Spaces in Indian villages are segregated according to caste status to dissuade social interactions between castes. However, the film's urban settings relaxed the rules limiting interactions between different castes. Among the three families, Navin Rai's and Gurucharan's families belong to the upper-castes. Although they are upper-caste, Gurucharan felt inferior to his peers because of his low-paying government job, which resulted in his lower-class status. The third neighbor, Madhav, belongs to a lower-caste, but his economic affluence gave him prestige among upper-caste neighbors. Although the interactions between the three families do not involve overt class or caste discrimination, the differences become unavoidable when prospective marital alliances are sought for the young people in the three families. Shekar's and Lalitha's childhood friendship evolves to become romantic love. Despite their equivalent caste status, the difference in their class status poses obstacles to their love. Similarly, when Girin, Madhav's brother-in-law, seeks Lalitha's hand in marriage, their difference in caste status poses an obstacle to their union.

*Job (Naukri)* Unemployment is a central theme in this film. Consequently, the difference between the gainfully employed and the unemployed reflects class structure. Despite Ratan's college education, he is hard-pressed to find a job because of the labor crisis. Because of the abundance of educated but unemployed youths, neighbors, landlords, and potential employers treat Ratan and others like him as expendable. When Ratan visits offices to inquire about job openings, doormen and peons reject his request to meet the manager and rudely throw him out of the building for being a nuisance. Such reception grated on the job-seeking youth, lowering their morale. The lack of a job makes others see Ratan as a failure for no fault of his own. When Ratan requests Seema's father for Seema's hand in marriage, the latter dismisses Ratan for not having a job. Although Ratan and Seema belong to the upper-caste, Seema's father pushes Ratan to a lower class because he lacks a job.

## 6. Death

Many of Bimal Roy's films explore the symbolic meanings of death and dying. Although a character's death carries a tragic element, deaths are places to explore harsh truths and hidden realities. These moments in Roy's films produce catharsis in viewers.

*Married Woman (Parineeta)* Death in *Married Woman* stands in sharp contrast to the vitality of love expressed by young people. Navin Rai's and Gurucharan's deaths signify the end of dark emotions and make way for brighter futures. Because Navin Rai and Gurucharan are their respective families' patriarchs, they expect respect and obedience from the younger generation. Nonetheless, their rigid ideas obstruct the genuine love blossoming between Shekar and Lalitha. Although the two elders' deaths bring sadness, the two marriages add joy to the film's plot.

*The Jew (Yahudi)* The Roman persecution of Jews is a central theme in *The Jew*. In this film, Bimal Roy addresses the Roman laws and heavy sanctions on Jews that inspired obedience out of fear in the Jews. Governor Brutus is known for sanctioning the most notorious sentences in cases involving Jews. He sentences Ezra's young son, Elijah, to be thrown into the lions' den. Towards the film's end, he sentences Ezra and Hannah to death in boiling vats of oil. Such sentences provoke the Jews' anger and inspire the desire to take revenge on the Romans. As in *Married Woman*, death in *The Jew* carries a symbolic meaning. The death of a parental figure releases their children to venture in previously prohibited directions. When Ezra was alive, he forbade Hannah from marrying Marcus because of his Roman identity. After Ezra's death, Hannah and Marcus find each other again and run away to a different future where their religious differences will not be an obstacle.

*Job (Naukri)* In *Job*, Bimal Roy explores young jobseekers' unhappy state of existence from constantly battling depression, anxiety, and self-doubt. Since the film is set in a period of high unemployment, it sheds light on young people driven to suicide because of a lack of opportunities. In addition to daily rejections from potential employers, impoverished families' hopes also placed immense pressure on young job-seekers. The guilt of a college education paid with debts taken on by their families is a daily burden. Ratan's friend, Shankar Mukherjee, demonstrates this guilt. Unable to live up to his family's hopes and alleviate their dire financial straits, he decides to commit suicide. Although Ratan saves him in the nick of time, Ratan also arrives at the same conclusion, to end his life, when he loses his first job in Bombay. His inability to provide for Seema, his love, and his failure to fulfill his mother's hopes worsened his desperation. Luckily, Seema saves Ratan when he is about to kill himself. Their love gives him the courage not to give up on life. At the film's end, Roy asks viewers to be more considerate of job-seeking youths.

*Madhumati* In *Madhumati*, Bimal Roy uses the death of the main characters to reverse injustices perpetuated by the film's villain, Ugra Narayan. As a rich and powerful man, Ugra Narayan uses his wealth and social power to tyrannize the people in his community. However, his scheme to acquire Madhumati, a beautiful tribal woman, backfires and leads to his downfall. When Ugra Narayan traps Madhumati at his palatial house, she runs to the rooftop and commits suicide, choosing death over giving in to Ugra Narayan's amorous advances. Nevertheless, the story does not end there. Madhumati returns as a ghost with a vengeance and aids her lover, Anand, in solving the case and eliciting a confession from Ugra Narayan. Although Anand also commits suicide at the same spot as Madhumati, they find a happy ending in reincarnation.

## CHARACTERS

Bimal Roy's characters leave a strong impression on viewers. In addition to presenting good and evil characters, Roy took pains to explore the gray sides of his characters. Some of his good characters have fatal but redeemable flaws. Similarly, some evil characters hide soft sides within their hard exterior shells.

### 1. Hardworking

A strong work ethic is a prized quality in Bimal Roy's films. The good characters apply themselves to their tasks and fulfill them with great care. In addition to the main characters some of the supporting characters in the films, uncle in *Two Acres of Land*, Gurucharan in *Married Woman*, and Shankar in *Job*, are examples of characters who personify hard work and sincerity.

*Shambhu Maheto* Among Bimal Roy's films, Shambhu Maheto in *Two Acres of Land* best embodies the spirit of sincere hard work. Although his diligence does not yield the desired results, his demonstration of hard work is unparalleled. When all his peers lose their lands to unpaid loans, he manages to hold on to ancestral lands despite the financial pinch caused by drought and famine. Despite the lack of marketable skills, Shambhu persists in securing a job immediately after arriving in Calcutta. He works hard at his new job as a rickshaw puller. Shambhu's sincerity inspires his son, Kanihya, who also constantly strives to emulate his father.

*Ratan Kumar* Like Shambhu Maheto, Ratan Kumar, in *Job*, also demonstrates the ethic of hard work. When he moves to Calcutta to get a well-paying office job, he tirelessly applies himself to the task. Ratan spends his mornings writing and mailing applications for jobs advertised in daily newspapers. In addition, he visits different offices in-person in the afternoons to inquire about openings and vacancies. Despite his harsh treatment during these visits, he refuses to quit and persists in his quest.

### 2. Morally sound

Bimal Roy makes a clear difference between the heroes and the villains by the degrees of morality they display in their thoughts and actions. The heroes possess unquestionably sound morals in all circumstances. Even when some characters display questionable morals, Bimal Roy explores the grey areas of humanity and shows that they still had good intentions. Therefore, such characters are still capable of being redeemed. Examples include Kanihya Maheto in *Two Acres of Land* and Navin Rai in *Parineeta*.

*Shambhu Maheto* Among the different heroes in Bimal Roy's movies, Shambhu Maheto stands out for his firm sense of right and wrong that never wavers in harsh circumstances. In the face of absolute poverty and total loss of livelihood, Shambhu holds on to his values. However, Shambhu's illness and the approaching loan payment deadline drive his son desperate. As a result, the latter pickpockets to make quick money. When Shambhu learns the truth, he punishes Kanihya. Furthermore, Shambhu also blames himself for failing to provide a good model for his son.

*Anand* Anand in *Madhumati* stands out for his single-minded pursuit of justice even when facing insurmountable obstacles. In the film's opening, he is a happy-go-lucky guy, a popular trope in Bollywood movies. However, his character develops depth after meeting and falling in love with Madhumati, a tribal woman. Her love for nature and her deep connection to her ancestors and community inspire a similar sense of connection and conviction in Anand. When he suspects Ugra Narayan's hand in Madhumati's disappearance, he persists in finding the truth. Even when there was no clear evidence to build a case, Anand's conviction fires his efforts to bring justice.

*Prince Marcus* Courtly upbringing defines the contours of Prince Marcus' personality in *The Jew (Yahudi)*. His belief in black-and-white definitions of right and wrong clashes horribly with his forbidden love for Hannah, a Jewish woman. He is torn between his duty to the country as the future ruler and his personal happiness. When Ezra, Hannah's father, objects to their marriage because of Marcus' Roman identity, he boldly argues that the power of love will overcome their religious differences.



Therefore, he rejects the stipulation to change one's religion for the sake of their love. Nonetheless, ultimately, Marcus chooses Rome out of his obligation as the heir to the Roman throne. However, when Hannah brings a case against him for breaking their marital agreement, he openly admits to his crimes and accepts the death penalty without protest.

*Emperor of Rome* The Emperor of Rome in *The Jew* stands firm in his strong moral compass among different characters in Bimal Roy's films. The Emperor of Rome, Prince Marcus' father, firmly believes in justice and refuses to be partial, even when his son is on trial. When Hannah brings up a case against Marcus for breaking a marital promise, the emperor orders Governor Brutus to conduct a fair trial and sanction just punishments. Even when the trial results in a death sentence for Marcus, the emperor refuses to intervene and skew justice for his son's sake. Despite the power and authority that the Romans exercised over Jews, he treated Romans and Jews alike.

### 3. Kind

Many supporting characters in Bimal Roy's films display kindness and supported the main characters in their quests. In addition, they are exceptional in their empathy and ability to encourage those around them in crucial moments.

*Rani* In *Two Acres of Land*, Rani takes on the role of Kanihya's elder sister when the father-son duo arrived in Calcutta. She comforts Kanihya when he misses his mother and soothes tensions between Kanihya and his father, Shambhu. Rani is the father-son duo's first friend who helps them find affordable accommodations. When misunderstandings arise between Shambhu and Kanihya, Rani intervenes and helps them reach an understanding. When Kanihya feels overwhelmed by worries, anxiety, and self-doubt, Rani encourages him never to give up. Furthermore, she is a firm supporter of Kanihya's efforts to find a paying job.

*Lalitha* Lalitha is one of the main characters in *Married Woman*. As a poor orphan living at her impoverished uncle's house, she has little room to make independent decisions. At her uncle's house, Lalitha never complains about the many chores assigned by her aunt. Her kindness and gentle resolve are her strengths. She always has a smile for those around her. Knowing Gurucharan's worries, she tries to be comforting and helpful in small ways. Often, others make decisions for her and impose on her time. Decisions made by Shekhar (lover), Gurucharan (uncle), and Girin (neighbor and friend) are constantly pulling her in contradictory directions. Nonetheless, she strives to be graceful and calm in all situations. As a result, she earns others' respect and admiration.

*Gurucharan* Gurucharan, in *Married Woman*, also stands out for his kindness and deep affection. He feels apologetic toward his family for his inability to be financially stable. However, he expresses his affection by always having a sympathetic ear for his wife and daughters. Whenever his daughter, Anarkali, has a difficult day at school or is made fun of by her friends, he patiently listens to her woes. Gurucharan also greatly appreciates Lalitha's gentle presence in his family home. Out of his appreciation, he feels motivated to secure Lalitha's future happiness even on his deathbed.

*Princess Octavia* Princess Octavia is Governor Brutus' niece and Prince Marcus' betrothed in *The Jew*. When Marcus falls in love with Hannah, Octavia feels betrayed because of their betrothal since childhood. Nonetheless, out of her longstanding friendship with Marcus, she is willing to overlook his betrayal of their love. When Marcus is sentenced to death for breaking his marital vow to Hannah, Octavia comes to his rescue. She pleads with the emperor, Marcus's father, for leniency. When the emperor refuses to budge, she discards her royal status and begs Hannah to drop her charges so that Marcus' death sentence can be revoked. In her actions, she demonstrates a devoted friend's unconditional kindness.

### 4. Intelligent

Many women in Bimal Roy's films display keen intelligence despite varying degrees of literacy and formal education. They apply this quality in navigating the complex interplay of patriarchal and social norms.

*Bhubaneshwari* In *Married Woman*, Bhubaneshwari is married to Navin Rai, a greedy and shrewd man. He fleeces his neighbors and imposes his iron-fisted authority on his sons. She draws on her intelligence and presence of mind to manage Navin Rai's authority and soothe tense moments. When her husband becomes overbearing in dictating their son's marriage, Bhubaneshwari stops him from making hasty decisions and implores him to consider their son's interest. Ultimately, her efforts to educate their sons are rewarding because they never adopt their father's methods nor his zeal for money.

*Paro* Despite being an illiterate village woman and a poor farmer's wife, Paro displays resourcefulness in taking charge of her family's dire financial straits. When the overdue loan threatens the loss of her husband's ancestral property, she immediately offers to take up paid work to raise the required funds. However, her husband's conservative mindset becomes a stumbling block to her resourcefulness. He refuses to allow his wife to do paid work. After her husband leaves for Calcutta, Paro relies on smart thinking to reduce the family's food expenses. For example, she forages for food to save on food expenses and sells the foraged food to make money. When Shambhu's accident puts him out of a paid job, Paro takes up work at a local construction site to compensate for the gap in the family's dwindling savings. Throughout the film, she relies on her quick thinking and resilience to produce out smart solutions.

*Seema* Seema in *Job* displays a keen sense of intuition. When choosing a prospective life partner, she values Ratan's relentless hard work and sincerity over Mr. Lalit's artistic verses and singing talents. After deciding on Ratan, Seema never wavers in her choice. When her father's conservative outlook and authoritarian mindset stand in the way of their relationship, she finds ways to slip away and meet Ratan. Seema runs away from home when her father forcefully arranges her marriage to a wealthy man's son. In doing so, she demonstrates inner fortitude and courage. After arriving in Bombay, despite Ratan's attempts to play off Seema's concerned questions, she notices that something is amiss with Ratan. Ultimately, Seema's presence of mind attuned to Ratan's worsening mental state plays a crucial role in preventing Ratan's suicide and saving him from total desolation.

## 5. Villainous

In sharp contrast to the virtuous and noble characters, Bimal Roy also depicts evil characters with sinister motives. The chasm between the two amplifies the former's goodness and the latter's evil. Very often, the villains possess wealth and positions of power. Through this dynamic, Bimal Roy shows the hard life of the common people stuck under villainous rulers and superiors.

*Harnam Singh* Harnam Singh is the landowner in *Two Acres of Land*, who schemes to seize Shambhu Maheto's ancestral property to build a mill on that land. His friends from the city promise quick returns on schemes to industrialize farming and agriculture in the country. Tempted by their tall tales, Harnam Singh refuses to consider the welfare of tenant farmers who were still recovering from the losses caused by recent droughts and famines. Out of greed, he uses the overdue loan to pressure Shambhu into giving up his ancestral property. He displays cruelty and a lack of empathy in his single-minded pursuit of wealth.

*Navin Rai* Navin Rai in *Married Woman* shares similarities with Harnam Singh in *Two Acres of Land*. Like the landowner, Navin Rai schemes after his neighbor's ancestral house next door because of his plan to build a house for his second son there. Through careful scheming, Navin Rai loans Gurucharan a large sum beyond Gurucharan's means to repay. He aims to use the overdue loan as leverage to force Gurucharan to sell his ancestral house. Although Navin Rai has schemes with the good intention of building his son a comfortable house close by, the end does not justify the means in this case.

*Governor Brutus* In *The Jew*, the Roman empire's domination over other religious and cultural minorities authorizes Governor Brutus' tyranny. He often uses his power to inflict cruelty and injustice on the Jews. Brutus was nothing like the Roman Emperor, his immediate superior. While the Roman Emperor extols impartiality and fair ruling, Brutus is a bully to his subjects. Consequently, Brutus sets a bad example for his subordinates, who also use their military might to oppress the Jews and financially exploit them. Whenever Brutus experiences discontentment, the Jews suffer. After his daughter's kidnapping, he sanctions raids and beatings in the Jewish quarter. His irrational hatred is

evident in all his judicial rulings. When a stone thrown by a Jewish boy hit him, he punishes him by sentencing him to death. Hannah's charges against Prince Marcus anger Brutus because Hannah, a Jew, dares to accuse a Roman in court. Therefore, he is unwilling to let Hannah go when she rescinds the charges against Marcus. Brutus sentences Hannah and her father, Ezra, to death.

*Ugra Narayan* In *Madhumati*, greed and envy define Ugra Narayan. His unquenchable appetite for everything in sight leads to his ultimate downfall. First, he acquires large swathes of forest areas that belong to forest-dwelling tribes through bribery and corruption. After he turns the land into a lumber estate, he cut off the natives from their ancestral lands. Furthermore, his cruelty and insensitivity towards the gentle forest dwellers influence his employees, such as Veer Singh and Munim, to advance the exploitation of the people and the land. Finally, Ugra Narayan's downfall occurs when he causes Madhumati's death. After seeing Anand's portrait of Madhumati, he lusts after her and schemes to abduct her. In all these instances, Ugra Narayan displays a blatant disregard for anyone else in a single-minded pursuit of his greed.