



**REFORM AND CHANGE IN EARLY 20TH CENTURY BENGALI SOCIETY: A  
STUDY OF CHATTOPADHYAY'S NOVEL *NISHKRITI***

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**Abstract**

*The goal of this research is to examine the societal reforms and modifications that took place in early 20th-century Bengal as a result of the flourishing Bengali Renaissance, as portrayed in Chattopadhyay's novel Nishkriti. The study technique included a qualitative analysis of Nishkriti with an emphasis on finding and evaluating themes connected to societal reforms and transformations in early 20th-century Bengal. To gather relevant data from the novel and conduct a thorough analysis of it, the research employed a content analysis technique. The study discovered that Nishkriti depicts a variety of societal reforms and transformations, including the promotion of females' education, the dissolution of joint families and the creation of nuclear families, the abolition of superstitious customs, the penetration of new ideas and creative business strategies, and empowerment of females. The novel also shows how children were drawn to fashionable practices and trends, which reflects shifting society attitudes. Ultimately, the study comes to the conclusion that Nishkriti accurately captures the spirit of change in Bengali society at the turn of the 20th century. The novel describes the social reforms and improvements that occurred during the Bengali Renaissance, including the abolition of superstitious customs and the empowerment of formerly oppressed groups as a result of growing consciousness and enlightenment. The novel also emphasizes the advent of fresh concepts and methods that contributed to the transformation of Bengali society.*



**Keywords:** Bengali Renaissance empowerment, societal transformation, superstition, enlightenment.

## Introduction

This study aims to investigate how Saratchandra Chattopadhyay's novel *Nishkriti* honors the Bengali Renaissance spirit. In Bengali society in the early 20th century, the Bengali Renaissance brought about several reforms. Due to the Bengali Renaissance's expanding light, many superstitious traditions were abolished. Girish advocates for women's emancipation in the novel *Nishkriti*. He makes financial investments in his cousin's wife's schooling. Shailaja is no longer limited to managing household chores. Her oldest in-law sister follows superstition. She frequently feels inferior. Shailaja, however, is practical and prudent. She enrolls her daughters in school. She frequently talks about the advantages for the family that come from having educated daughters.

The Chatterjee family's Siddeshwari is their oldest daughter-in-law. She holds to the idea that women have a predetermined faith. She believes that women are destined to endure suffering. Yet Shailaja dispels the fatalistic anxiety of Siddeshwari. In addition, men like Girish and Harish are becoming more accepting and helpful to their female counterparts. Girish goes above the norm and declares Shailaja the rightful owner of the land. Due to the spread of the Bengali Renaissance spirit, the community exhibits a certain level of religious tolerance. Most Hindus are observed complimenting Muslims for their mercantile ability. The son and daughter of Nayantara are enrolled in the modern private school. Young youngsters are drawn to the newest fashions. Several instances support the claim that the Bengali Renaissance's growing spirit has helped to reform and modernize socio-cultural tradition's stifling powers.

Some of the obstacles that push women into a backwards position in society are the dower system, the exclusion of women from public life, illiteracy, and isolated household life. Obstacles for women come from men's arrogance, aggression, misogynistic attitudes, indifference, and the patriarchal structure of society.

There have been several progressive movements in Chattopadhyay's period in Bengali society. Bengali Renaissance is one of the most influential movements. Many changes are made to social behaviors, gender relations, and women's individual independence. Writers who aimed



to represent this Bengali Renaissance spirit often have positive things to say about women. Women in Chattopadhyay's era endure terrible suffering as a result of strict patriarchal practices. They are unable to interact with the outside world. They are prevented from receiving an education. They fall behind in managing the annoyances of their own marriage as a result. *Nishkriti* by Chattopadhyay is written in this setting.

In this novel, there is a realistic dramatization of the differences between the worlds of men and women. In the external world, men almost always succeed in achieving their desired level of affluence. By doing this, they seldom make time for their wives' emotional needs and deepest longings. In addition, women do nothing except sit around the house doing nothing but running their households. They must then lead a life of idleness. They feel very alone since their spouses are required to work outside. They experience severe household loneliness and feelings of isolation. This sort of lifestyle eventually becomes a cause of pain.

In contemporary Bengali literature, Saratchandra Chattopadhyay stands out as the most notable author. He is the only author to have initially secured for contemporary India a presence on the global literary landscape. He continues to be the most widely read Indian novelist both inside and outside of India. He is without a doubt a part of Bengali literature, but he is also a part of Indo-Anglican literature. In essence, he was an internationalist and a critic of both life and literature. He was therefore a diversified personality and a versatile sweetheart while being the same person. He wrote undoubtedly the biggest quantity of novels and short stories ever written by a Bengali author. The best work of his is *Devdas*.

### **Objective of the Study**

The objectives of the research are:

1. To examine how Saratchandra Chattopadhyay's novel *Nishkriti* reflects the Bengali Renaissance spirit and the progressive movements of his time.
2. To analyze the obstacles that women face in Bengali society due to patriarchal practices, including the dower system, exclusion from public life, illiteracy, and isolated household life, and how these obstacles are challenged in the novel.



3. To investigate the portrayal of gender relations in the novel, particularly the differences between the worlds of men and women, and how these differences contribute to the pain and isolation experienced by women in their household lives.

### Literature Review

Numerous critics have commented over Chattopadhyay and his seminal novel *Nishkriti*. Ghosal (2001), who is the most prominent critic of Chattopadhyay, has presented her view on *Nishkriti* and revealed many important facts and findings about the novel. In her book *Social Realism in Chattopadhyay's Oeuvre*, published in 2001 Ghosal posited that *Nishkriti* is one of Chattopadhyay's most well-known works, and it is written in a straightforward and direct manner. Despite facing family disasters, Chattopadhyay never stopped writing and his complete dedication to the art of writing is the reason for his literary fame. What impresses readers the most is his attempt to realistically depict Bengali life in his novels. He captures his profound pain and unwavering commitment to social realism by arranging realistic details in his popular novels.

According to Andy Kester, Chattopadhyay has demonstrated his strong belief in the effectiveness of humanism. Several types of liberation have been explored by the spiritual liberation vision. Kester follows up on this idea and comes to a wise conclusion. This is a basic outline of Kester's viewpoint:

Chattopadhyay had a very deep religious caste of mind and profound humanism. He was both a patriot and an internationalist. In most of his popular novels and short stories, he sketches a moving picture of the nation he would like India to be. The India of Chattopadhyay's dream is a country where her people hold their heads high with their pride in knowledge and strength born of that knowledge. Prejudice and superstitious which narrow the mind and divide people would be a thing of the past. (21)

Kester claims that Chattopadhyay is searching for a location that will provide him comfort and sobriety. He aspires to embody that space where bravely speaking the truth out loud in public allows the world to hear it emanate from the depths of the heart. Such a quest elevates him in the most amazing way.



Dutta (1992), in the start of his literary career, Chattopadhyay was influenced by the romantic spirit. Eventually, as his literary knowledge grew in sophistication, he began to spiritualize his experiences. Dutta (1992) briefly explains his perspective on this type of transformation in Chattopadhyay's literary career:

*Nishkriti* is Chattopadhyay's novella which had earned him remarkable success. It is evident that Chattopadhyay started writing at a very young age of thirteen and the next sixty seven years were marked by continual and torrential flow of creativity in various forms of literary works. At the beginning of his literary career Chattopadhyay is a romantic and to some extent a spiritualist poet as he is the worshipper of beauty and this is also reflected in the novella, *Nishkriti*. (11)

Anything in nature that is attractive to Chattopadhyay is a physical manifestation of his inner trembling. Chattopadhyay frequently uses the natural world as inspiration for his writing. It's clear that he's happy to be among such beauties in nature. In *Nishkriti*, Chattopadhyay discusses a variety of things that bring him joy.

Roy (1999) reflects extensively on Chattopadhyay's viewpoint on feminism. The vivid depiction of the flaws in the societal framework that oppresses women in *Nishkriti* is Chattopadhyay's literary masterpiece. On this feature of Chattopadhyay's literary ranges, Roy (1999) says the following:

In the novella, *Nishkriti*, Chattopadhyay's perspectives on women can be seen explicitly. While his poems primarily describe beauty, nature and his search for what is beyond mundane life, his short stories deal with the lives of ordinary people. Women's struggles and sufferings are particularly highlighted. On one hand Chattopadhyay reveals the unequal social structure that oppresses women, on the other; he creates courageous women who challenge tradition. (76)

According to Roy (1999), the majority of Chattopadhyay's stories reflect his most recent perspectives on women. These opinions help to define the new woman. In the near future, according to Chattopadhyay, India will welcome new women. In doing so, Chattopadhyay exhorts



women to forge their own identities and recognize that being a wife and mother are only small parts of who they are as individuals.

Agnihotri (2001) suggests that Saratchandra Chattopadhyay initially was not comfortable with the idea of women's rights and was critical of feminists. However, as he gained a deeper understanding of social relations, he began advocating for greater freedom and decision-making power for women in both the family and larger society. Chattopadhyay's short stories explore three aspects of women's lives: romance, social oppression, and the emergence of a new woman.

Barma (1999), claims that Saratchandra Chattopadhyay's perspective on women was influenced by romanticism, which is reflected not only in his writing style but also in his early perception of femininity. However, as Chattopadhyay became more involved in the daily lives of common people, he became aware of the social oppression of women. Later in his life, Chattopadhyay's views on women became fully developed, and he believed that women should have more opportunities to break free from their traditional roles as mothers and wives. Chattopadhyay's powerful female characters challenged the established social system and advanced the cause of women's rights.

Mehata (2006) is interested in analyzing Saratchandra Chattopadhyay's themes, which include everything from the difficulties of religious strife and cultural politics to the revival of Bengali Renaissance. Characters are more likely to experience cultural shock when they fail to adapt and internalize the treasured underlying principles after being exposed to a new, foreign society. On Chattopadhyay's defining characteristic of genius, Linda Leith notes the following:

Chattopadhyay's territory is social change and change in gender relation. He chronicles the torture and agony of those who are affected by rash and alienating policies of administration and social structure. He is a marvelously accomplished writer, and her new novel represents not only a new departure but also the latest installment in a substantial and satisfying body of work. For readers new to Chattopadhyay's fiction, this is a rich vein to mine. (12)

According to Leith, Chattopadhyay records the topic of cultural transformation and social marginalization. The path to losing one's identity is paved by the intimate connection between a



painful experience of psychological lassitude and a shifting gender role. Chattopadhyay does not get the honor of exploiting the essential issue of social transformation. This subject is briefly touched upon in several of his stories.

Many of these critics and reviewers reviewed this novel from various angles and judgments, but none of them mention the Bengal Renaissance problem or how it has affected Bengali people in India throughout time. In *Nishkriti*, the Bengali Renaissance spirit is presented as the powerful force that has dismantled a number of societal prejudices and insularities. It has awakened individuals from all walks of life.

## **Methodology**

### **Methods of Research**

The research technique used in this study is qualitative analysis, which focuses on identifying and evaluating themes in the novel that are related to societal reforms and transformations in early 20th-century Bengal.

### **Methods of Data Collection**

The data for this research is collected from Chattopadhyay's novel *Nishkriti*, which is used as the primary source of information. Content analysis is the data collection technique used in this study, which involves a systematic examination of the text to identify and evaluate themes related to societal reforms and transformations.

### **Methods of Data Analysis**

The data analysis technique employed in this study is also qualitative analysis, which involves identifying and evaluating themes related to societal reforms and transformations in early 20th-century Bengal. The researcher uses content analysis to extract relevant data from the novel and then applies qualitative analysis to identify and evaluate themes related to societal reforms and transformations.

### **Theoretical Tool for Analysis:**

This researcher mobilizes the theoretical concepts of Bengali renaissance. In the early decades of the twentieth century, Bengal witnessed the gradual emergence of rebellious and



reformist tendency. Many writers like Bankim Chandra Chatterji, Rammuhan Roy, Vivikananda, Sarad Chandra Chattopadhyaya and others stressed the need of reform in many socio-cultural customs of Bengal. These writers made a call to end insular thinking, parochial trends, dowry system, superstitions and other regressive practices. Several poems, short stories and novels were written valorizing the necessity of socio-cultural reform.

The Bengali Renaissance hypothesis is applied by the researcher. Typically, the term "Bengali Renaissance" alludes to a mental awakening that occurred among Bengalis in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Bengal experiences several transformations and reforms as a result of the Bengali Renaissance. Women are educated and given more influence. Widows are permitted to remarry. Superstitious customs are no longer accepted. The Bengali Renaissance inspires a political and cultural awakening among the Bengali people. The Bengali Renaissance is viewed as a sign of impending transformation. Bengali Renaissance creates both the cultural and political awakening amidst Bengali people. Bengali Renaissance is treated as the harbinger of reform. The Bengal Renaissance of the early 20th century saw a drastic and dramatic change in the consciousness of Bengali people. Regressive and superstition gradually disappeared, and substantial progress was achieved in the field of gender equality. This movement was influenced by Rabindranath Tagore's writings, which called for spiritual transcendence to overcome bad customs and confining socio-cultural practices. The major achievements of the Renaissance were a secular struggle for rational freethinking, growth of modern Bengali literature, spread of Western education and ideas, fervent and diverse intellectual inquiry, and the rise of nationalistic ideas. These achievements brought sea change in the lives of the people of Bengal.

### **Textual Analysis**

This study explores how Saratchandra Chattopadhyay's novel *Nishkriti* portrays the spirit of the Bengal Renaissance. The novel presents the breakdown of the united family on a good note. Joint families persisted for a very long period in Bengal's traditional civilization. Joint families have many benefits and advantages, however they are outweighed by their flaws and disadvantages. The breakdown of the joint family makes room for the rise and foundation of the nuclear family, whose members will enjoy a high degree of personal autonomy.





There would be competition in a nuclear family. The beginning of society's shift may be seen in the steady decline of the joint family and the emergence of the nuclear family. Similar to how they do in joint families, women have more flexibility in nuclear families. They would be self-assured enough to deal with some of patriarchal society's risks and traps. In the book *Nishkriti*, the combined family of the Chatterjees breaks down, resulting in a severe sense of humiliation and disgrace. Yet the novel's last section sheds light on how this family crisis ushers in a new level of thinking and waking.

Three brothers that share a home are Girish Chatterjee, Harish Chatterjee, and Ramesh Chatterjee. Even after their weddings, they feel that it is a source of tremendous pride to continue to live together. The brothers all share a home with their wives and a few kids. They communicate well with one another and live in harmony. Girish, the family Chatterjee's oldest son, is married to Siddeshwari. The spouse of Girish's brother Harish Chatterjee is Nayantara. Girish and Harish's cousin brother is Ramesh. Shailaja is Ramesh's wife. The girish brothers, their spouses, and their kids all get along well.

Only Girish and Harish have great salaries in the combined household. Lawyer Girish makes a sizable and impressive salary. Harish also receives a big salary. Ramesh, meanwhile, has no income. He has no employment. Apart for a few simple housekeeping jobs, he simply sits at home and passes the time. He at one point began trading straw. Yet he soon suffered an embarrassing defeat. Girish gave him some money, but he didn't make a dime off of it. Ramesh has since been viewed as a lazy person who is incapable of achieving anything. He is not as well-known or respected in the combined Chatterjee family as Girish and Harish are.

This united family starts to encounter several difficulties as time goes on. The joint family's eldest daughter-in-law is in charge of managing the kitchen, allocating cash, and setting aside money for unforeseen expenses. Her choice would be crucial in making critical choices in the kitchen. Siddeshwari, however, lacks the power to control the circumstance. She transfers Shailaja's responsibilities to her as she is more clever, diplomatic, practical, and quick to react to domestic emergencies.

After receiving the key, Shailaja is in charge of taking care of Siddeshwari, Nayantara, their kids, and several more youngsters. The money is allocated by Shailaja to purchase cooking



supplies and children's clothing. Shailaja is wise enough to manage the family prudently despite the fact that her husband Ramesh is a laughing stock and a lazy good for nothing person. The Chatterjee family operates in this manner. To improve the financial situation of their homes, Girish and Harish are driven to earn a lot of money. Women perform their domestic responsibilities on time as well. Household politics gradually undermine this united family of Chatterjee over time.

Siddeshwari is the eldest daughter in law in Chatterjee family and holds the right to manage household tasks. She keeps all the money earned by her husband, Girish and Harish, and transfers this authority to Shailaja, the wife of Harish. Shailaja is moderately educated and has the prudence to handle household affairs. She is practical in her approach and does not face family quarrels and petty competition. Shailaja is a hard-working woman who does her work ceaselessly without taking rest.

Her assertive nature and prudence impressed all the Chatterjee members, and she is empowered in dealing with household affairs. The Bengal Renaissance was a social and intellectual movement that brought a sea change in the lives of the people of Bengal. It was a secular struggle for rational freethinking, growth of modern Bengali literature, spread of Western education and ideas, rise of nationalistic ideas, and challenge the foreign subjugation of country.

Strict beliefs and Hindu orthodoxy are ridiculed and then castigated. British philosophers' liberal new ideas are imported, then put to use. Roy (2004) appreciates western ideas that open the door to eradicating the oppressive powers of tradition. Roy thinks that the spirit of western enlightenment is imported and subsequently utilized in the Bengali community. Such a program results in gradual social transformation. Hinduism's regressive impulses are condemned as evil and corrupt. It is viewed as being unworthy of the respect of intelligent creatures. Several discussions center on the Hindus' deplorable condition. The cause of this situation is attributed to the followers' ignorance and superstition.

Girish tries to communicate that he has made a choice that would have broad repercussions when he notices sourness and wrath on the faces. Girish gives them the assurance that Shailaja has been given ownership of the home and the property so that her children won't suffer. Girish makes this choice for the good of the Chatterjee family as a whole. He briefs his entire family, including



his children. They experience tremendous happiness when they learn that this choice was made with wisdom and foresight. The passage below demonstrates the point:

With the greatest happiness, Girish nodded his head vigorously and asserted, did not you observe Boro Bou, how much I keep an eye on everything! A boy who has not even grown up, he will destroy all my property by deception! I have tied him in such knots that he will never be able to disentangle himself. Girish laughed out loud at his own little joke, and the whole house reverberated with his laughter. (738)

The rest of the family agrees with Girish's personal choice. The combined family has broken apart as a result of Ramesh and Girish's separation. Nuclear families are created and established as a result of the breakdown of joint families. Women benefit from and become more powerful as a result of this type of transformation. When sisters-in-law from the same joint family get together, there will always be a fight.

Women are informed about both domestic and extramarital activities in the novel. Girish is not sensitive or aware of outside happenings; rather, it is his wife Siddeshwari. Ramesh's dishonest behavior is more of a concern to Siddeshwari. The following extract serves as an evidence of Siddeshwari's increasing assertiveness:

Siddeshwari grew excited with hope and joy. She questioned once more that may well is, but let us talk of Patol. It is I who has brought him up. If the judge is told that he cannot live without me, that he might fall sick pining for me, won't the judge give an injunction that he stay with his Jethima? Now you are snoring- I suppose you have not heard a word! Siddeshwari forcibly shook her husband's toe. (728)

The spouses of the male characters in this book provide them advice, corrections, and encouragement. The majority of the male characters seem sluggish and slothful. They only carry back monthly compensation while doing their duties. Male characters like Girish and Harish are opposed to other things except this type of professional focus. Shailaja is cunning and diplomatic. She moves quickly and is nimble-footed. Siddeshwari is vivacious. She frequently questions her hubby. She even goes so far as to force her spouse to reconsider a decision he made on the fly of the moment.



The Bengali mind learnt to challenge ideas and beliefs in the first decade of the 1990s. In a distinctive way, Bengal experiences a Renaissance-style intellectual awakening that belongs in Europe. The new intellectual avalanche of European knowledge—particularly philosophy, history, physics, and literature—through the channel of English-language schooling, according to Derozi (2001), "may be considered to have altered modern thought & life quite drastically" (157). A "movement of discovery rather than re-discovery" might be used to describe the Bengal Renaissance. That was more of a nascence than a re-nascence (Bengali Renaissance: A Reflection 130). The major Puranic tales undergo a significant shift in Michael Madhusudan Dutta's works when seen in the context of Western philosophy. Dutta (2002) presents comprehensive analysis of the Bengali Renaissance:

The first phase of the Renaissance coincides with the rapid transition from medievalism to modernism in early nineteenth century India. The present system of religion adhered to by the Hindus is not well calculated to promote their political interests. This is because of the distinction of castes, introducing innumerable divisions and subdivisions among them, has entirely deprived them of patriotic feeling and the multitude of religious rites and ceremonies. (112)

When Bengali Renaissance reaches its height, protests against the dowry system, caste-based prejudice, stifling rituals, and the weight of tradition are heard. It is vital for their faith to change in some way. The movement to spread the essence of the Bengali Renaissance gains strength even in the face of the zeal of religious reform. People are encouraged to support social improvements via the agenda of religious reform.

Siddeshwari, despite her lack of formal education, is careful about how much money she spends on food. She even reprimands Ganesh Chakraborty for misappropriating money. The excerpt that follows demonstrates my point:

The morning saw Siddeshwari engaged in some sort of verbal battle with Ganesh Chakraborty. Siddeshwari was new to this world of finances. Her latest conviction was that, finding her an easy prey, everyone was out to cheat her-hence there was no doubt at all that Chakraborty was misappropriating funds. Persistently she tried to make her point that Fifty rupees is a lot of money, Ganesh. Just because I do not have degrees, you cannot



convince me that you have spent just two rupees more than four dozen-and that accounts for fifty whole rupees. (729)

Within the Chatterjee family's domestic environment, female characters enjoy a lot of independence. There are no aggressive or overbearing masculine characters. In the text, the Chatterjee family represents a microcosm. There are several free-spirited female characters in the book. They have the freedom to behave whichever they choose because of their liberal nature. The female characters feel ennobled to live as the Chatterjee family's daughters-in-law since there is a movement to educate women, release women from domestic servitude, and finally uplift women from superstitious practices.

Discord and separation are likely to arise in a joint family. Economic load pressures may exist. Because of this, joint families fall apart. The breakdown of the unified family liberates women from several responsibilities and demands. The development of the nuclear family is what gives rise to the idea of personal freedom. The expansion of the Bengali Renaissance's expanding spirit has resulted in the creation of the nuclear family and the dissolution of the joint family.

Hare (2005) committed his life to reform as well as the promotion of modern education in his adoptive nation, Bengal. He contributes to the spread of the Bengali Renaissance's ethos and spirit. Tagore (2001) comments on Hare's contribution in the manner described below:

He was the virtual founder of the Hindu College of 1817 and militated against Press Regulations and the export of coolies to Mauritius. He also pressed for the extension of the jury system. Disciples of Derozio were known as the followers of Young Bengal and one of their objectives were to summon Hinduism to the bar of reason. Indeed, one of its positive aspects was a fearless rationalism and a candid appreciation of regenerating new ideas from the West. (87)

Tagore (2001) questioned the idea that the Bengali Renaissance would bring about positive social transformation. The Bengal Renaissance has problems because its advocates and followers are slow to speak out against the British Raj. Bengali Renaissance's main characters are unwilling to understand the concerns of the laboring people. Their intellectualism does not unite them with the general public.



Nayantara refers to a man by the name of Nandu Mitter in the novel. He lives with his family collectively. While his sibling does not, he makes a lot of money. His sibling is a useless human being. Nandu devotes all of his money to supporting and educating his brother's children. It is required of him as the head of the joint family. Nandu, however, had nothing at the time of the split. Nayantara informs Siddeshwari about the issue with Ramesh's laziness by relating the tale of Nandu Mitter. The following excerpt makes the growing realization of the drawbacks of mixed families quite clear:

Once again, assenting gravely, Nayantara said, everybody can see that, Didi. She kept silent for a while and then said, I cannot help remembering Nandu Mitter of our village who was an extremely able clerk. Bringing up his younger brother, educating him and getting his children married-he did not relation anything for himself. Whenever his wife attempted to say a word, she would be harshly scolded. (725)

Siddeshwari is learning about the drawbacks of living in a joint family from Nayantara. Liberal and reforming movements seldom ever have an impact on the period of time when its members battle to choose their fate and future. Influenced by the Bengali Renaissance, many constrictive social norms and practices eventually go away. Because of this, the people of that era were becoming more and more reform-minded.

Bharati Roy emphasizes upon the idea of the Bengali Renaissance. The more the Bengali Renaissance expands, the more exposure of the faults of societal framework that oppresses women takes place. About this element of the Bengali Renaissance movement, Roy says the following:

The movement called Bengali Renaissance lays perspectives on women can be seen explicitly. While works on the Bengali Renaissance primarily describe beauty, nature and the search for what is beyond mundane life, nonfictional work on the Bengali Renaissance deal with the lives of ordinary people. Women's struggles and sufferings are particularly highlighted. What is sharply called into question is the unequal social structure that oppresses women. Many poets who celebrate the spirit of the Bengali Renaissance create courageous women who challenge tradition. (76)



According to Roy, the new woman emerges as a result of the Bengali Renaissance's growing spirit. This movement opens the door for the impending entry of new women in India. Women are urged to develop their own identities. They understand that being a wife and a mother is only a small part of who they are.

The Bengal Renaissance movement has the fervent backing of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. In his book *Variations on Renaissance* released in 2001, he investigates the movement Bengali Renaissance in conjunction with Swadeshi movement. The connection between the independence movement and the Bengali Renaissance, in Chatterjee's opinion, is intricate. Chatterjee spends much time on the Bengali Renaissance's historical context. He disagrees with the idea that the middle class had a significant role in the Bengali Renaissance. The political consciousness of the middle class is not sophisticated enough to comprehend the full significance of such endeavors. Intelligentsia members are typically unaware of such changes.

The Bengali society at the time still held onto certain superstitious customs. Before the Bengali Renaissance, Bengali society is fatalistic. No matter how ambitious they may be, people get disheartened and dejected. They frequently have a strong sense of destiny. But the ability of individuals to advance through time eventually replaces fatalistic thinking. Girish regularly mentions the advancements made by the Khans of Bagbazar. "It may well be, but you useless you," replies Girish. Look at the khans of Bagbazar instead of the straw you squandered so much of my money on! Trading in straw has made them millions of dollars (731).

Ghosal (2001) is interested in exploring Tagore's themes, which include everything from the challenges of religious strife and cultural politics to the revival of Bengali Renaissance. Characters are more susceptible to cultural shock when they are exposed to a foreign culture and fail to adapt and internalize the treasured underlying principles. Tagore documents the problem of cultural transformation and social marginalization, claims Ghosal (2001). The path to losing one's identity is paved by the intimate connection between a painful experience of psychological lassitude and a shifting gender role. The important issue of social transformation was not manipulated by Tagore. This subject is briefly touched upon in several of his stories.

Siddheshwari believes that fate is connected to the outcome of making false promises. Her spouse is forewarned not to make any empty promises. She informs her husband of the



consequences of a broken commitment in his upcoming pregnancy in a somber tone. Have you ever considered the consequences of your broken commitments in your upcoming birth? (734). The way people think has been changing gradually. Long rituals and collaborative family traditions are demonstrated to be vanishing.

The novel "Nishkriti" explores the disintegration of joint families and the gradual reform and progress of Bengali society. The author, Dutta (2007), criticizes Swami Vivekananda for not taking action against caste restrictions despite his verbal condemnation, and highlights the proximity between the Bengal Renaissance and the nationalistic struggle inspired by Western ideology. The story of Shailaja depicts the disillusionment and insecurity felt by women who are marginalized in various spheres of life, including family, marriage, and the professional world.

Sen Dasgupta (2002) praises the Bengali Renaissance's central tenet. The Bengali Renaissance, in his opinion, represents progress. Dasgupta wishes to refute some of the accusations made against this movement that it consists of backward-looking and compromised elements. The following quotes are from Dasgupta (2002):

In its best, the Bengal Renaissance is not a step backwards but a step forward in the reckoning of the masters of the movement and seminal minds like Michael Madhusudan Dutt and later Rabindranath Tagore. They used the contents of Western Ideology and Eastern traditions to create a remarkable symbiosis between rationalism and passion to forge British India's march to the Twentieth century. Madhusudan's critique of colonial thought marks the apotheosis of the movement. (44)

The Bengali Renaissance may have certain flaws and disadvantages, claims Dasgupta. Yet it must be acknowledged as a positive development. It maintains the synthesis of essential elements of Hindu heritage with western illuminating philosophy as its core. He is made aware of the paradoxes of Western imperialism by his embrace of Religion.

Dasgupta (2002) risks the danger of using an ambiguous definition of the Bengal Renaissance. This phrase implies the birth of a new spirit as well as a resurgence of antiquated knowledge and arts. The introduction of Western concepts helped shape and grow the Bengali





Renaissance's spirit. It draws attention to the tension created by this challenging cultural combination.

Shailaja was so astonished when her husband started acting proud and prejudiced that she started to feel like the ground under her feet was trembling and was about to collapse. She looked around the room for a support to stand on out of despair and suffocation. The following quotation exemplifies her complete powerlessness and psychological distress after learning of her husband's extramarital affair:

As the door closed behind him, my hands began to tremble, tears streamed down my face and then I screamed and screamed until there was no breath left in me. Ma..... where is you? Help me; I lay on the ground like some animal, pulling at my hair, choking on the tears. I looked up and saw his pictures on his table. I crawled onto my knees and threw them to the floor, smashing them with my fists and cutting my hand on the piece. Why? Why did he bring us to this place only to leave u? Why? Did not he know what it would do? (84)

The aforementioned quote clearly illustrates Shailaja's husband's cruelty and insensitivity. Shailaja is devastated to learn that her spouse has abandoned her totally, leaving little prospect for a reconciliation. She discovered herself in a very hopeless situation. She had put up with her husband's snide behavior for a while. She had started to interpret his icy demeanor as the result of his unsettling job life. She cries in a fit of acute horror as she recalls her mother. She is compelled to adopt her mother's name since she has no other choice.

Another architect of the Bengali Renaissance is Vivekananda. He is a fervent advocate for the cause of educating women. He believes that discovering the value already there in mankind may be done via education. Vivekananda (1998), education represents the perfection that exists in every person. As a result, the teacher's sole responsibility is to clear any obstacles in the road. He argues that "Education was not merely receiving and storing of material, but promoter of mental focus and builder of Character" (74). Moreover, he says, "Educate your women first, then let them be; they will tell you what reforms are essential for them" (80).



Shailaja feels psychically wounded by her husband's harshness and misbehavior. Nevertheless she makes the decision to change her husband Ramesh's contradictory actions. Shailaja is deeply upset when her spouse disagrees with her long-cherished ideas. He walked away with quick, broad steps. Shailaja barricaded herself in her room and sobbed nonstop (86). One of the most significant causes of Shailaja's growing suffering is Ramesh's insensitivity. The sentences that follow highlight how Shailaja experiences a severe shock as a result of his egotistical and self-centered behavior:

For him work was a pursuit of that unattainable goal that cared for nothing-not the wife's pleas, not the friend's invitation, not even one's own comfort. From the line that divided her domestic world from his, Shailaja observed with awe Ramesh's labor on the other side. He had taken himself far beyond the boundaries of his home, extending his work to distant lands, employing hundreds of people. Man battles with his fate every day; if a woman's tender arms attempt to hold him back from that perilous trail, he has no choice but to break out of the embrace ruthlessly. (67)

As a method to dedicate oneself to one's talents, respect for work is a sort of self-respect. His belief in this philosophy has become more firm, and as a result of its influence, he has become a more arrogant guy. He seldom pays attention to what his wife values in life, what she expects from him, or how vital it is for him to spend the last of her alone time in the house. The core of Ramesh's unstable family life is his carelessness and irresponsibility.

In terms of modern Bengali literature, Tagore stands out the most. He is the only author to have initially secured for contemporary India a presence on the global literary landscape. He continues to be the most read Indian novelist both in India and abroad. He undoubtedly belongs in Bengali literature, but he also belongs in Indo-Anglican literature. He was a commentator of literature and life who was primarily an internationalist. He was therefore many things and a darling of variety, yet he was still the same man. He perhaps produced the most lyrics of any poet in history.

Vardwaz (2007), states that Tagore's perspective on femininity is influenced by romantic ideals about women, and if women are given greater power and chances, they may energize and revitalize society. Rabindranath attacked the traditional societal structure and preconceptions that



were detrimental to the growth of women while giving us strong female figures befitting the modern age.

Siddeshwari exaggerates her reasoning and comes to the conclusion that she is wishing in vain for Girish's proximity. Yet she finds it exceedingly challenging to conduct her everyday affairs with mental propriety and reason. She concentrates on her everyday housework in an effort to deal with her illness. Nonetheless, it is unlikely that she will benefit from the outcome. The sentences that follow show how vainly Siddheshwari builds a palace in the air to steal Grirish's closeness and intimacy:

Thus in a chamber deep under the surface of her everyday life, in silent darkness, Siddeshwari constructed, a memorial to her hidden sorrow, adorning it with garlands of tears. Neither her husband nor anyone else had the right to enter here. This spot was a secret as it was deep-rooted as it was beloved. It was here and there alone that she shed all her worldly disguises and entered as herself, unveiled and uncovered, reemerging afterwards in the theater of the world's laughter and conversations and activities with her mask firmly affixed to her face. (60)

It is hard to understand how Siddheswari managed to develop such strong emotional ties to Girish unintentionally and without her knowledge. Girish's abrupt absence has caused a serious amount of uncertainty. His absence creates a void that is too great to be filled. She begins to sway when she learns that Girish spends a lot of time outside the house. She discovers a more horrific truth as her torturous days go on. There is no alternative that can ease the grief caused by Girish's absence.

Consequently, it should be emphasized once more that Saratchandra Chattopadhyay's novel, *Nishkriti*, portrays the spirit and ethos of the Bengali Renaissance. The Bengali Renaissance's spirit has been absorbed by the movement to educate girls and abolish the dowry system. The novel clearly captures the spirit of the Bengali Renaissance, as evidenced by reforms in a number of societal spheres, including education, marriage, and family structure.



## Conclusion

The main conclusion of this study is that the spread of the Bengali Renaissance spirit was followed by a number of improvements in women's situations. In Chattopadhyay's *Nishkriti*, Shailaja is an example of a female character who is conscious of dominance and submission in the joint household she lives in with several other people. Girls are admitted to schools. Female characters that are strong advocates for education include Shailaja and Nayantara. Their prosperous married lives are a result of the education they earned. In the novel *Nishkriti*, independence and individuality in Bengal are depicted as growing trends. Siddeshwari and Nayantara, the story's two main female protagonists, decide to conduct their lives in a way that makes their homes and marriages happy. In addition to feeling alienated by patriarchal society's restrictive character, they are unsatisfied with the conventional gender roles. Although they want for independence, they are not entirely ready for the difficulties that come with it. The culture laughs at their failure and takes joy in their humiliating and self-destructive failure.

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