

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
Anwasha Maity, PhD

THREE GIRLS / *TEEN KANYA* (1961)

The Postmaster; The Lost Jewel (Monihara); The Conclusion (Samapti)

Satyajit Ray

(Bengali language)

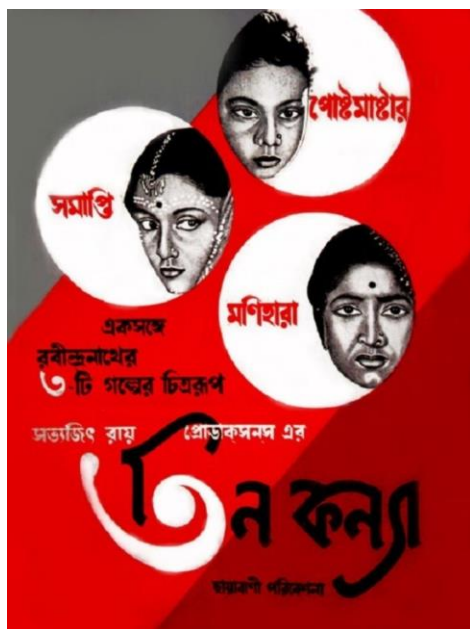
OVERVIEW

Auteur and the film in his oeuvre

After *Devi* (*The Goddess*, 1960), next in Ray's oeuvre is another woman-centered film, the anthology *Teen Kanya* (*Three Girls*, 1961). It was conceived as a tribute to Rabindranath Tagore on his birth centenary in 1961, along with a documentary film (*Rabindranath Tagore*), commissioned by the government in Delhi. As Ray's interlocutor Andrew Robinson states, "(h)e chose to adapt three of Tagore's shorter stories rather than one novel or another longer work... mainly because he felt the necessity of expressing the diversity of the man". Indeed, the general consensus among Bengali intelligentsia is that Tagore's short stories are more powerful and demonstrate greater finesse than his novels or longer prose works, coming second only to his poetry/songs.

A central female protagonist features in all three individual shorts of this anthology film. They have in common loss as a theme and patriarchy as an institution. All three stories are in a rural setting; Ratan in *Postmaster* and Pagli in *Samapti* are born and raised in the village, while Monimalika in *Monihara* moved there. Beyond that, their plots and emotive foci couldn't be more different. *Postmaster* is poignant, interspersed with situational comedy; *Monihara* is a nail-biting suspense-horror; and *Samapti* is a sweet romantic comedy.

Teen Kanya was shown in Bengal in the above order, but as subtitles couldn't be completed in time, it was shown internationally as *Two Daughters*, without *Monihara*. The film was awarded the Selznick Golden Laurel for Best Film at the 13th Berlin International Film Festival and the National Film Award for Best Feature Film in Bengali, in 1961.



The Postmaster

SYNOPSIS

A city-bred young man, Nanda, arrives as a postmaster at a small, out-of-the-way village. He finds it difficult to adjust to village life and its many unexpected surprises, such as going to bathe in a pond, snakes and a local madman. A seven- or eight- year-old orphan girl, Ratan, takes care of him. He is kind to her and teaches her how to read and write. This unexpected kindness makes her very attached to him; she nurses him back to health from a bout of malaria and even chews the bitter pills so he can follow her example. He decides to leave for the sake of his health, but does not tell her. She is hurt and ignores him and his proffered coin as he leaves.

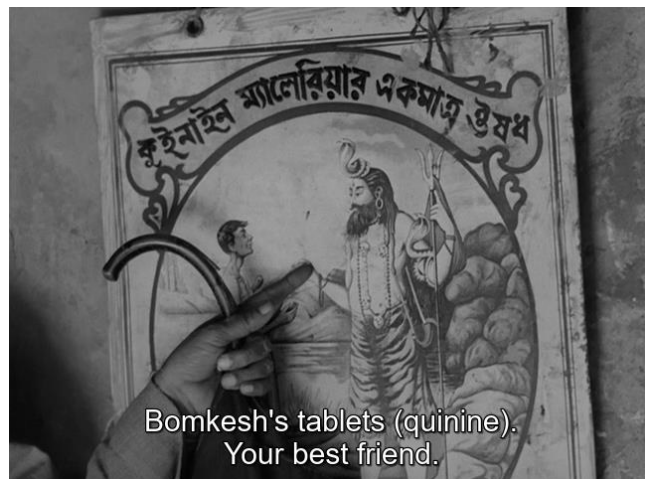
CHARACTERS

Nanda/Postmaster
Ratan

A city-bred young man who comes to a village as the postmaster
An orphan girl who takes care of the postmaster's household chores.

PLOT

Opening scene A young man, Nanda, newly arrived from the city as a postmaster to a small village, is cautioned by his predecessor about malaria and introduced to a young girl, Ratan, who will take care of his household needs. He takes stock of his meager, ramshackle accommodations and unpacks a few possessions, including some books and a notebook entitled "Poetry".



Snakeskin and meeting a madman Clearly unaccustomed to bathing in a pond, he is frightened after seeing a discarded snakeskin in the bushes nearby. He hurriedly returns and orders Ratan to bring water from the well. He is scared out of his wits again by the village madman (Crazy Bishu) who poses, dozes, yells and is finally chased off by Ratan.



A conversation with Ratan . He asks her about her parents. She replies that they are dead and she has no family. The previous postmaster used to treat her badly and beat her, too. Ratan strikes up a conversation about his family. She seems jealous of his sister, who knows how to read, write and sing. Ratan sings him a song while he rests. Impressed, he gives her a coin to buy a slate and chalk, telling her he will teach her to read and write so there will be no difference between her and his sister. She shows off her clean sari.



Getting used to village life Some days later, the postmaster is at work stamping letters, while a few old villagers crowd in his office. He tells them that the quiet village life is ideal for poetry writing, if nothing else. The old men invite him for their regular musical soiree in the evening; he declines, saying he studies English at that time. Nanda writes a letter to his mother about the village and how lonely he is there. Ratan carefully washes clothes at the pond and hangs them up to dry. Suddenly, he hears some commotion outside and grabs a stick—but it's only Crazy Bishu yelling outside the house. Afraid again, he calls for Ratan, but not hearing from her, hides in bed with an open razor blade. Ratan and Nanda both get proficient at their new tasks—the girl with reading, writing and chores; the young man with his postmaster duties.



Nanda gets malaria Nanda attends a musical soiree with the old men. That evening Ratan finds him shivering with malaria and calls the doctor and village elders. She tends to him with blankets and cool compresses throughout the stormy night.



A transfer letter- and a poem A few days later, Nanda has recuperated somewhat. He writes a letter in English, requesting a transfer, as well as a short poem for Ratan in Bengali, which she is able to read herself. The poem praises her careful work and says that she is like a sister to him. He asks her if she will miss him but does not clearly say that he is going to leave. She chews bitter malaria pills to convince him to take them and she finally concedes.

Farewell Nanda greets the new postmaster after resigning from the job, and Ratan accidentally overhears the conversation. Nanda requests the new postmaster to continue teaching Ratan to read and write. Ratan, sobbing, continues getting water from the well and walks by Nanda without acknowledging him. He, a coin for her in his hand, finally realizes what he has lost. She calls out to the new postmaster, saying that she has brought water for him.



CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Ratan Rational/Agreeable (*Confident, Trusting*)

Merely seven or eight years of age, Ratan is responsible for the village postmaster's household chores. An orphan, she is treated badly by most, except the new postmaster Nanda. She gets better at chores and learns to read and write from him, nursing him back from malaria. But she is abandoned at the end.

Confident Given her age, stature and general life circumstances, Ratan's confidence immediately strikes the viewer. From doing household chores such as cooking, cleaning and washing clothes, to quickly and efficiently fulfilling her new master's somewhat unreasonable orders, such as bringing water from the well, to pacifying and chasing away Crazy Bishu, Ratan is exceptionally confident in everything she does. When Nanda falls sick, she is astute enough to fetch the village elders and she confidently provides the care a sick person needs. She is confident, too, in her new reading and writing skills, when she is able to read the poem Nanda writes for her, all by herself.

Trusting Before Nanda's arrival, Ratan had no reason to trust anyone fully as she was mistreated by them. But Nanda's kind nature and his willingness to teach her earns him her trust. She trusts that after comparing him to his own sister, he will continue to remain there and care for her. But ultimately, she is betrayed when Nanda decides to leave. To be fair, no other practical, long-term resolution was possible in the relationship between these two unequal individuals. Regardless, the betrayal of a young girl's trust, irrevocably damaging her ability to trust again, remains poignant.

Nanda Conscientious/Agreeable (*Orderly, Kind, Loyal*)

Born and bred in the city, Nanda is like a fish out of water in the village. He, however, tries to adapt the best he can, both to his job and his new lifestyle. He is proficient at his job, friendly with the neighbors and afraid of little things. He is also both kind and honest. Only at the end does he begin to realize the impact of his casual, unthinking kindness on Ratan.

Orderly Nanda takes pride in his sense of orderliness, whether in unpacking his few possessions carefully, practicing personal hygiene or instructing Ratan to clean and cook on occasion. He is proficient at his postmaster duties, which appear mainly to be stamping letters and receiving and giving them to the courier. His handwriting and diction are also neat and orderly.

Kind Nanda initially thinks that Ratan might be a thief, so he locks up his wallet before going to bathe at the pond. But her sad background and trusting, straightforward nature soon compel him to be kind towards her. He doesn't beat or reprimand her but has no qualms in enjoying the services of what is essentially child labor, though of course, it was not seen that way at the time. But the more damaging impact of his kindness is when he compares her to his sister, thus giving her a false sense of importance in his life. It is a casual and superficial kindness mingled with pity and, in actuality, not much more than a modicum of decency someone in his position could display.

THEMES

SOCIETY (patriarchy)

Patriarchy In *The Postmaster*, Ratan's dire straits are compounded by her gender. The ease with which she accepts a permanent position of servitude for successive postmasters shows how internalized patriarchy is for her. She accepts the decisions of the male village elders and the postmasters unquestioningly because she is unaware that she could even have any other choice. As for Nanda, he would eventually be transferred or leave. Even if he had considered it—which he did not—it would be challenging for him to bring a young girl back to his own household. Hailing from a lower middle-class family and now jobless to boot, he would hardly be able to financially support an orphan girl, let alone a girl who would reach puberty soon enough and would have to be married. Despite his kindness, the practices of patriarchy make any other resolution nearly impossible.

RELATIONSHIP (caring)

Caring In *The Postmaster*, a relationship of mutual caring develops between Ratan and Nanda, though neither are fully aware of its depth until the end. On a practical level, Ratan takes very good care of Nanda's comforts, from chasing away the village madman, to bringing water from the well, to cooking, cleaning, staying by his bedside and nursing him through a bout of malaria. To her, he is more an older brother/father figure than an employer. Nanda is also taken by Ratan's innocence, trustworthiness and her care in all her tasks, as expressed in his poem for her. Perhaps the ultimate example is how carefully he teaches her to read and write, thus helping pave a slightly better future for her. He even requests the new postmaster to keep teaching Ratan how to read and write and to treat her well.

PSYCHOLOGY (Loss)

Loss In *The Postmaster*, loss of trust is a central theme. Compounded by the context, the story's poignancy hinges on the fact that it could hardly have been any other way. After meeting Nanda, Ratan learns, for the first time in her life, that she deserves kindness, care and effort from another human, no less than the respected postmaster, in fact. That she becomes completely attached to him, without a definite plan or future prospects, is completely natural for a girl of her age who has already lost her family. She unconsciously tries to fill the loss of her family with Nanda, as something between a father figure and an older brother. Thus, when he decides to leave without even the common courtesy of telling her, he essentially puts her back in her place as a servant girl whose opinions don't matter at all. Ratan is so hurt and her trust so completely broken that she ignores him outright in the last scene of the film, where she walks past him carrying a heavy water bucket.

The Lost Jewel (Monihara)

SYNOPSIS

A rich young businessman, Phanibhusan and his jewelry-obsessed and paranoid wife, Monimalika, move to a village after inheriting his ancestral mansion. She is bored there, but spends her time admiring her jewelry and tidying up the house. A former acquaintance, Madhusudan, suddenly approaches her for a job, which Phanibhusan is easily able to find for him. However, Phanibhusan's jute factory burns down and Monimalika is afraid that he would take her beloved jewelry by force in order to make up for the loss. Taking advantage of his trip to Kolkata to secure a loan, she leaves with Madhusudan, who has promised to take her to her father's house. On his return, Phanibhusan brings another necklace for her, but her ghost returns to claim it.

CHARACTERS

Monimalika/ Moni	A paranoid young woman obsessed with gold jewelry
Phanibhusan	A rich young businessman and Monimalika's husband
Madhusudan	A treacherous man, Monimalika's former acquaintance

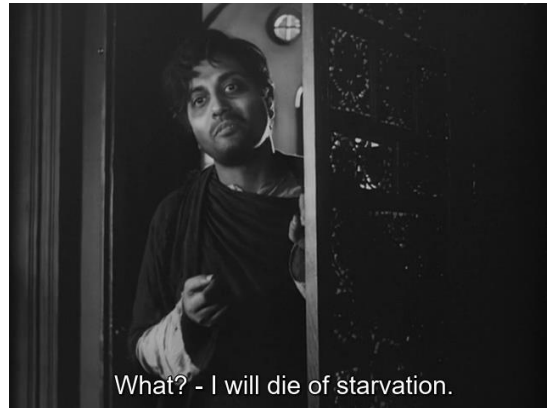
PLOT

Haunted House A middle-aged man, the narrator, wearing a coat and dhoti and carrying an umbrella, enters a dilapidated mansion. He goes to the steps by the adjoining riverbank and meets a black-cloaked figure. He introduces himself as a local schoolteacher named Gobinda Chakravarti, striking up a mostly one-sided conversation. The narrator says that the mansion, which belonged to the Saha family, is rumored to be haunted; he has a special interest in spirits and ghosts but has not been fortunate to see one. He has collected a story of what happened to the Sahas, but everyone dismisses him as a pothead. He launches into the family history with the black-cloaked figure as the listener.

Phanibhusan and Monimalika move to Manikpur About 30 years ago, a young man named Phanibhusan and his wife, Monimalika, move to the Saha mansion from Kolkata after he inherits it. She says she loves it there. She wants him to buy more jewelry for her, even though he has never denied her. He says there is a condition— that she should love him. The narrator comments that crudeness would be more effective than gentlemanly behavior in love and on how women generally tend to find “bad boys” more attractive than the nice ones.



An “old friend” A disheveled young man, Madhusudan, visits Monimalika. She is shocked and angry to see him and their interaction hints at a past unsavory relationship. He begs her to ask her husband for a job for him, her “distant cousin”, and assures her that he will be ready to help whenever needed. She rudely tells him to leave and never return.



Monimalika’s paranoia Phanibhusan returns from work one day to find Monimalika dressed in a beautiful sari and most of her jewelry. Even though she is bored there, she does not want to return to Kolkata as all their relatives apparently hate her since she couldn’t have children after ten years of marriage. He tries to convince her that he loves her regardless and to throw her worries away in the river. He also says that has found a job for her “distant cousin” Madhusudan.



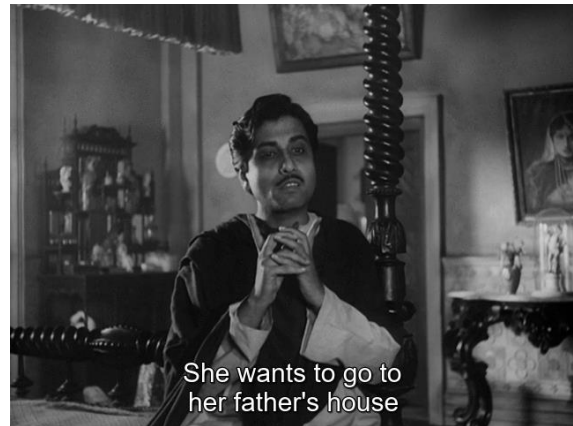
Jute queen Monimalika sings a song written by Tagore based on a difficult South Indian composition. Phanibhusan brings her new earrings. She is distrustful of the household servant after he saw her admiring her jewelry. But Phanibhusan assures her that the servant can be trusted completely. He calls her “jute queen”, which, coincidentally, has a double meaning of the third wife of a king in folk tales.



Jute factory burns down The narrator continues reading from his notebook, describing how Phanibhusan's jute factory burnt down. Now, he has to pay back the losses. Clearly agitated, Monimalika offers her jewelry to test him. When he is surprised and asks for them, she snatches up her jewelry box and locks it up. She does not believe that he won't take her jewelry by force even though he assures her of that. He says he must travel to Kolkata to make financial arrangements, even though he is hesitant to leave her alone. He promises her some jewelry when he returns.



Monimalika and Madhusudan Madhusudan visits while Phanibhusan is away and gets suspiciously comfortable on the marital bed. She asks him to take her back to her father's house, showing him the jewelry, all of which will be gone if her husband can't arrange for a loan. She wouldn't survive without them! He agrees to take her and she laughs maniacally. He tells her to send the servant away for the evening.



Betrayal Monimalika dons all her jewelry. Madhusudan comes, sits on the marital bed again and takes one of Phanibhusan's ornate canes. He asks her if she had any regrets betraying her husband; she replies that her only regret is that she won't get the new piece of jewelry he promised her. She throws away the house keys. He asks about the jewelry box. She shows her bejeweled self and dares anyone to take them while she's alive.



Phanibhusan returns Phanibhusan returns to find Monimalika missing, with a queen of hearts playing card and a cane strewn on the floor, the house keys on the bed and the jewelry box empty. The servant, crying, tells him she had sent him away and he doesn't know anything. Despondent, he looks at the new necklace he bought her, but is startled by a woman's laughter.



Monimalika returns! It is midnight. Phanibhusan is woken by the sound of anklets and repeated knocks on the door. He rushes out but sees no one. The narrator asks the other man if he was still awake and listening, then continues his tale. It is midnight again the next night. Phanibhusan lies awake and hears the same peal of anklets. A shadowed figure resembling Monimalika enters. Just as he's about to open the jewelry box, a skeleton hand wrests it away, with a woman's shrill laughter!



The end The narrator asks the other man if he had enjoyed the story, and he replies that it was excellent but full of factual errors. He finally introduces himself as Phanibhusan Saha and disappears into thin air. The narrator groans and scrambles away, leaving behind his notebook, marijuana pipe and umbrella.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Monimalika Emotional (*Obsessed, Paranoid*)

Monimalika is a bored and lonely homemaker; despite her husband's attempts to appease her, she is cold towards his affectionate advances. Her only joy in life is to fill and admire a large box full of gold and gemstone jewelry. She is obsessive about being parted from her beloved jewelry and paranoid that everyone was out to take them away, in one way or another. Her obsession blinds her to her husband's love and her former acquaintance's treachery.

Obsessed Monimalika is forever anxious about her own inadequacies, which she fills with an obsession with jewelry. She takes them out of the box and admires them multiple times each day, even putting some on to show that she's prettier than Phanibhusan's aunt, whose framed picture she compares herself to. She is obsessed and anxious in her overall behavior throughout the film, whether in pushing her husband away, taunting him and seeking attention, or behaving rudely to Madhusudan; her only regret is that she won't get the new jewelry promised her when she leaves. So much so, that she states she simply cannot live without them; it turns out, that was exactly the case. She was so obsessed that she returns as a ghost.

Paranoid Compounding Monimalika's anxiety is paranoia; examples abound. She complains to Phanibhusan that the servant saw her jewelry and isn't sure he can be trusted; she complains that all the relatives treat her badly as she couldn't have children; she complains that he would take her jewelry to pay his debts. She does not realize Madhusudan's nefarious intentions as she was more paranoid about the possibility of the jewels being taken away than about a threat to her own life; she even believed that wearing them and guarding them would save her. The narrator comments on these mentally unstable behaviors, saying that Phanibhusan should have paid more attention to taking better care of her.

Phanibhusan Agreeable (*Tolerant, Generous*)

Phanibhusan is a rich, young owner of a jute factory and Monimalika's rather tame and straightforward husband. He is honest and trusting, never forcing himself on her, physically or otherwise, as he loves her. It's his kindhearted nature that lets Monimalika take him completely for granted and finally betray him, after he loses his business in a fire.

Tolerant Phanibhusan tolerates his wife's unreasonable and sometimes aberrant behavior with a smile; the narrator critiques him for it and says he should have been firmer with her. He tries his best to endure her paranoia and counter it with a rational explanation. For instance, he says that the servant had raised him and could be unquestioningly trusted, and that he brought her to the remote village as she was feeling cornered by relatives' expectations.

Generous He is generous to a fault and even encourages her obsession with jewelry by getting her a new piece every time he's away, in a futile attempt to buy her love. Even after losing his jute factory to a fire, when he has to visit Kolkata to secure a loan to cover the losses, he makes sure to bring her an ornate and expensive necklace. He even gets a job for Madhusudan at the factory when she introduces himself as her "distant cousin".

Madhusudan Disagreeable (*Disloyal*)

Madhusudan's identity isn't clear in the film. But from his interaction with Monimalika and her intense reaction to him, it seems that the "distant cousin" relationship hid a deeper truth. Most likely, he was in love with her earlier and she rejected him. In any case, he is vindictive, treacherous, greedy and shameless enough to come and beg for a job from her and possibly murder her later.

Disloyal His suspicious behavior and disloyalty are apparent from the very beginning, whether in making himself comfortable on Monimalika's marital bed or stealing one of Phanibhusan's canes, thus symbolically usurping her husband's role. He also betrays his direct benefactor, who got him a job. That he would betray Monimalika's trust for the jewelry is clear in his expression when she shows him the box and when he directly asks her about them before they leave together. He had hired a boat for the journey. It is likely that he tried to take off her jewelry, and in a scuffle, Monimalika fell into the river and drowned, or somehow died in his hands with her jewelry still on and he threw her into the river, unable to take them off. In any case, her death is not shown.

THEMES

SOCIETY (patriarchy)

Patriarchy In *The Lost Jewels*, Monimalika's obsession with gold jewelry is both a personal affliction and a social issue. In a patriarchal society such as Bengal, women, who have many barriers to working or inheriting property, can only retain some semblance of financial independence on the basis of their 'women's- treasure', usually jewelry inherited or gifted by parents and relatives. In fact, the woman returning as a ghost to lay claim to her jewelry has been explored in several other literary and cinematic pieces post-Ray. In addition, when her paranoia makes her mistrustful of her relatives, and even Phanibhusan, she has to depend on a treacherous man to escape to her father's house because traveling alone would have been unimaginable for a married woman of her class.

RELATIONSHIP (marriage)

Marriage In *The Lost Jewels*, Monimalika and Phanibhusan's marriage is an atypical one. Phanibhusan appears to love her greatly, making every effort to keep her comfortable, including buying her more and more jewelry. He also trusts her enough to share many details of his professional life. Monimalika's only marriage, however, is to her gold; so much so, that she asks Phanibhusan to swear by it! She brushes him away every time he gets physically close to her and does not seem to be interested in a conjugal relationship at all, looking at the undisturbed state of their marital bed. She does not trust him either, always fearing that he will take her jewelry.

PSYCHOLOGY (Loss)

Loss In *The Lost Jewel*, loss of sanity and, consequently, life is a central theme (as highlighted in the title). Monimalika had always suffered from obsession and paranoia; after Phanibhusan's business losses, this is amplified to a loss of sanity when she is convinced that her husband will take her jewels. Even in her mentally disturbed state, she would otherwise likely have reconsidered the drastic step of betraying her husband and escaping to her father's house more carefully. This loss of sanity is demonstrated in her deranged behavior while planning the escape—she makes odd movements and faces and even bursts out laughing in a completely uncharacteristic fashion. And once sanity is gone, her life is lost, too, and she can only return as a skeleton ghost. Today's viewer is likely to find that bejeweled skeleton hand amusing, not frightening, but in the 1960's it would have been novel, as the horror genre was not at all established in Bengali film.

The Conclusion (Samapti)

SYNOPSIS

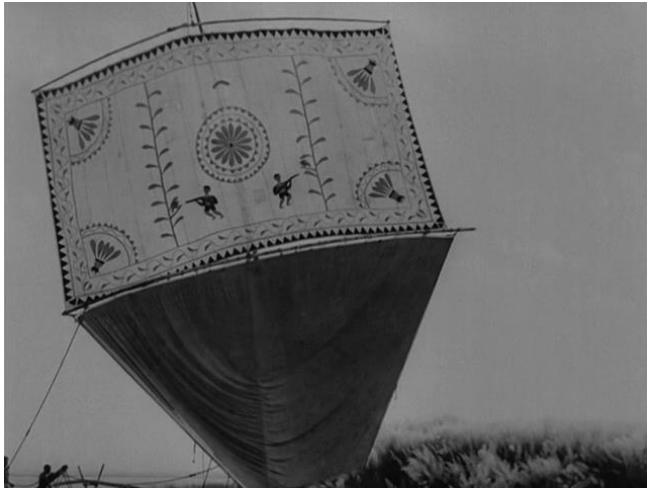
On returning to his ancestral home in a village, Amulya, a highly educated young man, is almost forced into an arranged marriage. But a newly-arrived, tomboyish and naughty teenage girl, Pagli (formally named Mrinmoyee), manages to capture his heart. He marries her, but she escapes by climbing out of the terrace on the wedding night. He leaves for Kolkata, telling her that he will return if she writes to him. Pagli falls in love and matures into a respectable young woman in a few months. Amulya returns on the ruse that his mother is ill. The young couple reconcile and live happily ever after.

CHARACTERS

Amulya	A highly-educated young man whose mother wants him to get married
Mrinmoyee/ Pagli	A tomboyish teenager girl new to the village

PLOT

Amulya and Pagli meet We see a bespectacled young man, Amulya, reading a book on a boat and a young girl, Mrinmoyee (nicknamed Pagli), chewing a sugarcane stick near the riverbank. The man falls in the mud while disembarking; the girl laughs at him and runs away.



A marriage proposal He walks home and is greeted by his mother. Over lunch, he tells her he wants to study law, and his mother says she wants him to get married to a girl she has selected, the second daughter of a relative. He doesn't like the girl or the idea. He hears Pagli laughing and playing outside with other children.



Getting ready The village elders come to accompany him to the prospective bride's home, but he angrily says he will go alone. While putting on socks with garters and well-shined black shoes, he asks the servant about Pagli. The servant replies that her father works in a faraway town and that they had lost everything when the river flooded. Amulya comments that she is shameless and disrespectful.



Viewing the bride On the way to viewing the bride, Amulya has to walk through a muddy field, ruining his shoes. Pagli hisses at him while swinging on a swing. He's greeted by his hosts and is awkward. The proposed bride, dressed up and shy, is brought out and her proficiency in various crafts is displayed. Amulya shows some disappointment at her elementary education. As she starts to sing, Pagli throws her pet squirrel Chorki into the room and upends everything trying to catch it. Amulya chokes on the sweets he was eating.



Muddy affair When leaving, he can't find his shoes and walks home in his socks through the mud. Suddenly a shoe comes flying. He catches the culprit Pagli with the second shoe. It's love at first sight! She slips and skids in the mud trying to escape. He rejects the other girl, and his mother is heartbroken. He says he already knows who he wants to marry.



Amulya wants to marry Pagli Pagli puts Chorki in a cage and leaves it in a discarded temple chariot at the riverbank. Amulya's mother is distraught that he wants to marry a tomboy and a dimwit like Pagli and she cannot tolerate people poking fun at her. She threatens to leave and sobs in her room. She then sees Pagli climbing a tree from the open window. She calls Pagli by her formal name, Mrinmoyee and asks her to come inside.



Pagli is questioned and the match fixed Amulya's mother questions Pagli about her proficiency in housework and cooking. She tells the girl that she had to be more modest if she came to live there, but Pagli doesn't understand. Amulya's mother finalizes the match.



Pagli is confined Pagli's mother tells her to stay at home and learn housework during the month before the wedding. She clumsily embroiders a cloth with the words: "the husband's virtue is the wife's virtue". Bored, she tries to leave the house, but her mother doesn't let her. Sobbing, she cuts off her long hair to avoid marriage. Her mother beats her (off-screen).



The wedding night Amulya asks her why she is so unhappy. She replies that she hated being forced to marry and is afraid that he will beat her. He is nervous and pedantic about the “norm” for proper wifely behavior and adapting to change. While Amulya sleeps, she takes off her noisy anklets, hides them in the gramophone, runs outside to the terrace with an adjacent tree. We are not shown how she climbs down that tree in her wedding attire, but in the next shot, she runs to feed Chorki, still in its cage in the chariot.



The next morning Before daybreak, Pagli swings on a swing at the riverbank. She falls asleep there and is escorted home. Amulya is embarrassed and ill at ease. Amulya's mother is furious and locks the girl in his room, where she sobs, breaks things and even tears his books. Hearing the noise, Amulya comes running; the room is in a mess. He asks her to clean up the room, and wonders how and where she spent the night. She obliges, cleaning up and answering him. He says he will return to Kolkata, leaving her with her mother. He will be very happy if she writes informal letters to him.



Growing love/ Days pass Pagli lies on bed and cries, refusing a guava from her brother. Her mother berates her but later comforts her, trying to get her to eat. But she refuses and both of them cry. Some more days later, Chorki, who she hadn't fed, dies, but she doesn't care; she just smiles with a faraway look on her face.



A ruse and Amulya's return Amulya's mother praises him to a neighbor. The neighbor writes a postcard that his mother is sick, as a ruse to bring him home. He returns. We see Mrinmoyee (Pagli) now dressed like a good wife in a sober sari, its loose end draped over her head. She is writing a letter to him. She learns of Amulya's return and rushes to her in-laws house. His mother initially pretends to be sick but can't keep it up and confesses.



A sweet ending Amulya goes to his room and finds the anklets she had hidden on the wedding night. He goes to look for her at her house and at the riverbank but doesn't find her. She is hiding and crying, sitting in the rain; she smiles when he hears her calling but stays hidden. Returning, soaked, he throws the anklets on the bed and finds her letter, "Please come back. Yours, Pagli". She climbs a tree to get in and says she won't do it again. They close the door.



CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Pagli/Mrinmoyee Open/Agreeable (*Unconventional, Loving*)

Pagli, formally named Mrinmoyee, is a tomboyish, naughty girl with a heart of gold. She has recently arrived at a new village, as her home was lost in river floods. She spends most of her time playing with younger neighborhood boys and is an unruly nuisance, to the extent of running away on her wedding night by climbing a tree. But she eventually falls in love with Amulya and leaves her old lifestyle behind.

Unconventional Pagli/ Mrinmoyee is introduced as an unconventional girl, so much so that her nickname 'Pagli' itself means "crazy". She cares little about proper behavior for a girl her age (early- to mid-teens)— from climbing trees, to playing with boys, to catching and keeping a squirrel as a pet, to releasing said squirrel and disrupting Amulya's bride-viewing session, to cutting off her long hair to get out of marrying Amulya. Not a single thing she does is conventional. Even after marrying Amulya, she resists marriage with all her might, first running away to feed her pet and then throwing, breaking and tearing books and other objects in the room she was locked in.

Loving Despite her unconventional behavior, everyone agrees that she is a caring and loving girl. We see this first in her love for her squirrel, Chorki. She is initially hesitant about Amulya, fearing that he will beat and abuse her like other men she knows. But his absence made her heart grow fonder and she soon falls in love with him, enough to transform her into a completely conventional, proper wife. She even promises him that she won't climb trees anymore!

Amulya Open/Agreeable (*Humorous, Trusting*)

Though born in the village, Amulya studies in Kolkata and plans to pursue a law degree. Initially against the idea of marriage, he falls in love with the tomboyish Pagli and marries her despite his mother's objections. But his hopes of a happily ever after would have to wait, as Pagli completely rejects him on his wedding night; hurt, he decides to return to Kolkata. But his trusting, kind and humorous nature leaves enough of an impact on Pagli to change her ways.

Humorous Amulya has the fortunate knack of finding humor even in unsavory situations that go against his grooming as a budding intellectual. The muddy scenes are especially hilarious, such as falling after getting off the boat, slipping in the mud, ruining his new shoes, walking in his socks and borrowed sandals in the mud and so on. Although annoyed, he takes them in his stride. He also finds humor in Pagli's antics and (what seems to him) her naive concerns about domestic abuse.

Trusting Amulya's trusting and uncomplicated nature is seen best in the relationship with his mother. Although annoyed by her efforts "for his own good", such as arranging a marriage match and rarely agreeing with her, he trusts that she has his best interests at heart, especially after she accepts Pagli. He also trusts Pagli enough to leave her with her own mother like an unmarried girl (their marriage isn't consummated until after the very last scene), instead of at his home as a married wife.

THEMES

SOCIETY (patriarchy)

Patriarchy In *The Conclusion*, much of the loose intellectualism of Kolkata's city culture has rubbed off on Amulya, though it is impractical in his home village. He despises the idea of an arranged marriage, wants his bride to be educated beyond elementary level and always presents a modern and gentlemanly front, be it in dress or behavior. The only reason he seems to be attracted to Pagli, and not the other homely girl, is her unruliness and unconventionality, which is his complete opposite. However, the moment he marries her, he expects her to become the very picture of a conventional wife, going so far as to lecturing her on propriety and the inevitability of change. This is completely internalized in Pagli, as well, when she brushes off her wild side, symbolized in the dead squirrel, thus effectively taming herself into domesticity.

RELATIONSHIP (love)

Love In *The Conclusion*, the adage "opposites attract" couldn't be truer. Amulya and Pagli apparently have nothing in common: he is educated, polished and a budding intellectual; she is a rambunctious tomboy who loves nothing more than playing outside. Their first meeting is a practical joke, when she steals his formal shoes and he has to trample through the mud in socks and borrowed slippers. Amulya catches her in the act and then it's her turn to slip and skid through the mud to get away! Still, he falls in love, enough to marry her. For Pagli, love comes later, after a period of separation, during which she transforms from tomboy to wife.

PSYCHOLOGY (Loss)

Loss In *The Conclusion*, loss of innocence is a central theme. The film begins with Pagli chewing on a sugarcane stick, her upper body bare and wearing a striped sari common to younger girls, laughing at the man who slips and falls in the mud and then running away. It is the very picture of a village girl, particularly in Ray's oeuvre. In contrast, the last scene shows her in Amulya's embrace, wearing a red or black bordered white saree with a blouse, with a red dot on her forehead, both of them rain-drenched and out of breath. These two contrasting images immediately represent the loss of innocence and the transition from girl to maiden to wife, at least to an audience with any familiarity with (predominantly Hindu) South Asian culture. Unlike the other two stories though, this loss is not something the characters mourn, but rather welcome, as the proper way of how things should be.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) Identify two examples and discuss the nature of village life in this anthology film. Examples could be from a single short film or any two of them. How important do you think the setting is to the plot?
- 2) Which of the three short films left the greatest impression on you? Why? Discuss with two or three examples.
- 3) Do you agree with this essay's reading of patriarchy as an institution in *The Three Girls*? Why or why not? Discuss.
- 4) Which minor/recurring character do you think leaves the greatest impression on a central character? Examples are Crazy Bishu from *The Postmaster*; the narrator or Madhusudan from *The Lost Jewels*; Amulya's mother or Pagli's mother from *The Conclusion*.
- 5) Do you think *The Lost Jewels* is successful as a horror story? Refer to setting, atmosphere, decor and character analysis, among other things, in your discussion.