HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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AND QUIET ROLLS THE DAWN / EKDIN PRATIDIN (1979)

Mrinal Sen

Bengali language

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Contents

Overview
Synopsis
Characters
Character Analysis
Themes
Scenes







OVERVIEW

Director Mrinal Sen made his first feature film in 1953 but was slow to come into success as his first few films didn't fare well at the box office. Eventually, he tasted both success and controversy with *Baishey Sravan* (*Wedding Day*, 1960) and *Aakash Kusum* (*Up in the Clouds*, 1965). Soon after, *Mr. Bhuvan Shome* (1969), a landmark film, radically altered new cinema and art-house cinema in India. Other films such as *Mrigayaa* (*The Royal Hunt,* 1976) and *Aakaler Sandhane* (*In Search of Famine*, 1980) still retain their impact. Sen won awards at all the major international film festivals, including Cannes, Venice and Berlin. His films usually have a signature shock treatment style that is both cerebral and hard-hitting, coupled with technical jugglery and gimmicks. He was both loved and hated for his uncompromising political stance and critique of the contemporary communist government in West Bengal. Along with Satyajit Ray and Ritwick Ghatak, Sen is considered one of the trio of great Indian filmmakers both domestically and internationally.

Film *And Quiet Rolls the Dawn* is based on a short story, "*Abirata Chenamukh*" ("A Continuous Procession of Known Faces", 1957), by Amalendu Chakraborty, which is much less mysterious and has a

more explosive (but predictable) ending. The Bengali title of the film literally means “the same day every day”, highlighting the ennui of the main characters and more in keeping with the short story. The film was produced by Sen himself and he completed the shoot in a mere three weeks. Exactly ten years after *Bhuvan Shome*, Sen reinvented his style for *And Quiet Rolls the Dawn,* both in terms of form and content, likely in response to the general feeling of well-settled complacency that had come over the now-established leftist political scene in West Bengal— his old friends were in power, he appreciated some of the good work done by the government and apparently there were no enemies around. This led to a search for the “enemy within” and Sen’s film-making took an inward turn.

Reception The film was selected before completion at the Indian Panorama Section of the 1979 Bangalore Filmotsav, where in response to naysayers from the selection panel who were unwilling to screen a film without having watched it, the then-director Ragunath Raina reportedly said, “Even Sen’s bad films are worth watching”. From standing ovations there, it went to Cannes where it was received spectacularly and came to be known as “The Cannes Silent Winner”. The film also picked up a handful of national awards (Best Director, Best Feature Film in Bengali and Best Editing, 1980) and went to half-a-dozen international film festivals. It was particularly well-received in the Scandinavian countries, which was puzzling to Sen as the film’s central issue— a woman returning home late from work in the early hours of the morning— wouldn’t even be an issue in those permissive societies. In the subcontinent and other “Third World” countries, however, Sen often faced direct interrogation from delegates about what kept the woman away from home for such long hours and he enjoyed answering provocatively.

Controversy Like some of his other films, *And Quiet Rolls the Dawn* also invited bitter controversy over an exchange with Satyajit Ray, who was very ill at the time. Ray was unhappy with Sen’s comment that Sen himself did not know what had happened to the woman. In a personal letter to a friend in June 1991, Ray angrily wrote, “never before has the maker shown such ignorance about characters authored by him”. This letter was leaked to a leading national daily, *The Statesman*, without Ray’s permission. Sen was visibly shaken by this accusation but declined to respond publicly, keeping Ray’s physical and mental fragility in mind. In private, however, he expressed being deeply hurt by Ray’s insensitive comment and failure to understand that Sen did not believe in the omnipresent and omnipotent role of storytellers in cinema. However, there was no scope for dialogue with Ray, as he passed away soon after.

Cinematic narration Sen shed much of the flashiness, loudness and banter of his earlier films in favour of greater cinematic restraint here. Indeed, his signature black screen appears only once; instead, the camera lovingly, lingeringly captures close-ups of the characters’ careworn faces repeatedly. But a few of his signature cinematic techniques remain— commentary by an invisible chronicler or people from different strata taking at the camera as if in an interview at the hospital or screaming newspaper headlines such as WOMAN’S DEAD BODY FLOATING IN LAKE and PATHETIC COURTROOM CONFESSION BY CALL GIRL.



SYNOPSIS

An historic mansion built during the 1850s, now ensconced in the dirty lanes of old Kolkata, is owned by a formidable landlord named Dwarik Mallick. The dilapidated house currently serves as primary residence to. Hrishikesh Sengupta and his family of six Hrishikesh has retired from his job and his oldest daughter, Chinu (Chinmayee), is the sole breadwinner of the family. At the beginning of the film, the youngest son, Poltu, comes home with a head injury, followed by a worse disaster that will upend their familial relationships— Chinu fails to return home one night after work.

Minu and Tapu (Chinu's sister and brother, respectively) take the lead in trying to ascertain Chinu's whereabouts. Minu tries to call Chinu's office from the pharmacy, leaking the "secret" of her lateness to all and sundry, including Dwarik. Tapu and his friend visit the local police station to file a missing person's report, from where they are directed to a morgue to identify if any unidentified corpses that may be Chinu. The police come to their doorstep with alarming news of a woman who tried to commit suicide by jumping off a train— she was in the early stages of pregnancy. A sympathetic neighbour (Shyamal), Hrishikesh, Tapu and his friend go to the hospital. The women dies of her injuries, but she is not Chinu either. Other neighbours discuss what could have happened, both in the family's presence and otherwise, with news of murders and kidnappings, elopement and trafficking— pretending to be sympathetic while obliquely slandering Chinu's character and adding to the stress. Cracks start to appear— Minu accuses her parents of being neglectful and selfish toward Chinu, whose entire life was devoted to her family's well-being; she was the money-making machine that they didn't want to marry off lest they didn't have enough to live on. Minu fears that someday soon, she herself, burdened with the same responsibilities in place of her sister, would disappear one night never to be heard from again.

Chinu, however, returns. But she is greeted with a stony silence. Dwarik rudely asks the family to vacate their rooms as young women staying out late at night was unacceptable in this *bhadralok* (similar to 'gentlemanly') neighbourhood and house. Tapu nearly beats him up for that and it seems that the situation is leaning toward normalcy. The next morning, life goes on as usual for the other tenants, but we aren't shown any of the Sengupta family members except the mother, who tiredly lights the stove to begin cooking.

CHARACTERS

Chinu (Chinmayee) Sengupta	A young working woman
Minu Sengupta	Chinu's younger sister, a college student
Hrishikesh Sengupta	Chinu's father, a retiree
Maa	Chinu's mother, unnamed,homemaker
Tapu	Chinu's younger brother, unemployed
Dwarik Mallick	Landlord of the Sengupta family

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Minu

Minu is the character we see the most in this film. She is the second daughter of the Sengupta family and Chinu's younger sister. She takes care of most household responsibilities while Chinu is at work, and she also studies in college. She is the only one who truly understands Chinu's predicament without judgement, as she can easily envision herself in the same shoes.

Resilient Minu is a resilient young woman who manages to handle unexpected situations with grace and without getting overtly emotional. For instance, she takes Poltu to be treated at the pharmacy for his injury without any drama or sentimentality. She expertly sidesteps the neighbours' mocking comments and inquisitive behaviour both in and outside the home when Chinu fails to return. She (instead of her parents as would be more typical) speaks with the police and gives them the details of Chinu's appearance and character. Overall, she displays a presence of mind and a sense of responsibility far beyond her young age.

Unconventional Although she hasn't yet found herself in a position that requires her to do something extremely unconventional, Minu is well aware of the hypocrisies that underlie the patriarchal family structure. She strongly voices her opinion on Tapu who is a good-for-nothing son and brother, saying that there was no point in waiting for him to help find Chinu. She bitterly argues with Maa about women's roles that are circumscribed by society— if a woman has to work and be the main breadwinner of the family, then it should be acceptable that she sometimes returns late from work, as would be the case of any son of the family. Of all the characters in this film, she has the most revolutionary potential in this sense.

Empathetic Having earned money by tutoring students before Chinu found a job, Minu is empathetic towards her sister in a way only someone in the exact same situation can be. The second time we see a glimpse of Chinu, in a non-narrative sequence where she stands much like the Goddess Lakshmi granting wishes to all, Minu is the only family member who remains silent and doesn't ask for anything. In a sentimental sequence later on in the film, after all avenues of finding Chinu have been exhausted, she accuses her parents of being selfish and neglectful of Chinu while pretending to care for her. She fears the same fate for herself if Chinu really did abandon them. She can easily see her own fate, burdened by responsibilities towards her family: she wouldn't be allowed to marry and have a family of her own and may well disappear one day just like Chinu.



Maa

Hrishikesh's wife and the children's mother (played by the film-maker's wife, Gita Sen) remains unnamed in the film as many filmic mothers in Bengali cinema are. She is the real backbone of the Sengupta family, caring for and nourishing them at the expense of her own physical and mental health. Typical of a character in that context, she holds traditional opinions on gender roles in society, including a preference for sons and devaluing other women.

Hardworking Throughout the film, we hardly see the mother resting or not tending to someone else's wants, be it comforting Poltu who's suffering from a head injury, or making sure her family eats dinner, or that Jhinu lays asleep on the mattress and not the bare floor. Most of her day is spent in household chores like cooking on an inefficient old stove and washing dishes at the communal well in the house. While waiting for Chinu after a long day and nerve-wracking evening, she finally sleeps a little, but collapses soon after waking from stress and long-term exhaustion.

Conventional Maa takes on a conventional role of a homemaker, both in her daily lifestyle as well as in her opinions about women's role in family and society. She firmly believes that women, irrespective of financial independence, must remain submissive to her elders and especially the menfolk in the home; in all things, she must also try and maintain her respectability and honour. Like the other adults in the household (excepting Minu), she appears to be more concerned about "loss of face" and respectability rather than what actually happened to Chinu. The other side of this conventional neglect towards her daughters is her doting and permissive behaviour towards her two sons— she coddles Poltu and gives wide berth to her older son, Tapu, for his disinterest in taking care of the family. Even when Tapu tries to fix a shoe with the spice-grinding pestle, a strict no-no in terms of hygiene in a Hindu household, she reprimands him only gently.

Short-tempered Although she is very patient for the most part, all the daily stress and the burden of being the backbone of the family takes a toll on Maa's mental health in a time of crisis. She barks at Minu for asking her to serve dinner, saying that they only see her sitting down and doing nothing— something obviously untrue. She gets into a few hot-tempered, bitter arguments with Minu, as when Minu chases away some slandering ladies or when her neglect towards Chinu is pointed out. But she cannot admit that the family was deliberately keeping Chinu unwed so that she could financially provide for them.



Chinu

The film revolves around Chinu's failure to return home one evening; as such, it's unsurprising that Chinu appears in only three sequences: the first one in a jam-packed bus heading to her office; the second in a non-narrative sequence granting wishes; and the final one when she returns home almost at dawn but is greeted by silence and accusations instead of relief. She speaks only a few sentences which highlight her selflessness and concern for her family; in everything else, she is seen through others' eyes, being somewhat of an empty container that others fill with their own opinions.

Dutiful Chinu is a stellar example of a dutiful daughter and hard worker. At home, all admit that her energies are channelled towards providing for her family members in every which way possible. At work, she is an orderly and responsible employee who does not hesitate to work hard and stay late (if that is what actually happened), even at the risk of society's disapproval.

A role model Even according to the neighbours, who have hardly a kind word to say about anyone, Chinu is of flawless character. An elderly neighbour gets into a shouting match with his teenager granddaughter on this very issue— he is convinced that she eloped with a boyfriend, but she is equally adamant that the dutiful, responsible and respectable Chinu wouldn't dream of doing anything like that to dishonour her family. Chinu is a role model to her own sisters, as well, who look up to her.

Selfless Chinu has devoted her whole life to taking care of others, financially and otherwise, be it her lover who died in police gunfire or her natal family— all of whom expect her to shoulder that burden alone. She gets everyone whatever they want within her means, while not buying anything nice for herself. And she does this day after day without a complaint or a harsh word said to anyone.

Sensitive Given her character and background, it is indeed surprising how easily she breaks down sobbing when faced with the unspoken, nebulous accusation of doing something less-than-respectable late at night. She feels that she has been treated unfairly as no one expressed any concern for her well-being, but just about their own societal respectability.



THEMES

Mystery The film is set up as a mystery, with a distinct *Waiting for Godot* feel. The film goes on and there is no sign of Chinu, though the audience remains optimistic that she will be found as she's the named central character of the film. In the meanwhile, some of the family members wait helplessly while others run through every realistic scenario of tracking down a missing person. They rush from police station to morgue to hospital— the suspense builds each time and each time they are relieved to not find her dead or injured, yet with mounting apprehension that Chinu was facing something even worse— loss of respectability. The mystery deepens when, sometime after Minu calls Chinu's office from the pharmacy, the pharmacy phone rings. But a pharmacist, who was sleeping there, disturbed by the noise, lifts the phone off the hook and leaves it disconnected. No explanation or further reference is offered for this scene, so we are left to conjecture if it could have been Chinu who was calling to tell her family not to worry; in any case, the phone-off-the-hook certainly prevented Chinu's only possible avenue to contact her family. Further, no explanations are offered about her lateness when she appears for the last few minutes of the film; she says vaguely, "I was held up" and she isn't given a chance to elaborate.

In fact, Mrinal Sen admitted that he did not himself know the reason of Chinu's lateness. When questioned, he has been known to say, "You will see and suffer...and never know the answer" or that "it was in bad taste to pry into the private life of an adult woman", or sometimes, quoting Samuel Beckett, "Had I known it, I would have put it in the play". In any case, just as Godot's failure to arrive becomes a vehicle for exploring absurdist and existential notions about the modern world, Chinu's failure to return home at a respectable time in the evening exposes hypocrisies of Bengali lower-middle class values and cracks within the "model family" that is the Sengupta household.

Family Hrishikesh's family is, on the surface, a "model" one— seven members under one roof, headed by both parents and an even balance of sons and daughters, each fulfilling their roles appropriate to their life stage and means. They care and look out for each other; especially the youngest son, Poltu, is the apple of everyone's eye; Minu doesn't hesitate a moment to rush him to the pharmacy after he gets injured playing on the street. Needless to say, the film exposes how this "model" family is in fact deeply dysfunctional in ways the members don't clearly recognize themselves; deep-rooted resentments and injustices come to light in the course of the film when the family faces a crisis. Thankfully, the youngest members are relatively buffered from family troubles: Poltu keeps asking for Chinu but is distracted with books, and Jhinu stays asleep for most of the duration of the film. As for the adults, Hrishikesh literally watches from the sidelines; with his passive and even-tempered nature, he hardly shows any emotion on his face other than helplessness and anxiety. Having retired from his job, he can now only live on the earnings of his children, swallow any insults anyone spits at him and wait while there is no news of Chinu. Tapu, similarly, rises to meet the crisis, but it's easy to see that he's generally distanced from his family; he comes and goes as he pleases and his main motive is getting money from his mother and Chinu. This relative indifference/ non-involvement of the male members creates a somewhat skewed balance, because even though Maa and Minu run the family, the men's opinions remain are the last word on any issue. Maa and Minu seem to be at loggerheads on most matters— in a way only mothers and daughters can be— both being very opinionated women having to hold their own in a deeply patriarchal society. But their bitterest quarrel is about Chinu, the ideal, selfless daughter and sister, and the injustice done to her by indefinitely delaying her marriage. In this context, though, it isn't entirely unheard of that working women support their natal family long past marriageable age and remain spinsters by necessity or choice. Maa vehemently denies the accusation, saying that she had been squirrelling away money for Chinu's wedding jewellery and of course she wants Chinu to be happy and so on. And Minu only half realises that there is no escape from family expectations and responsibilities, irrespective of whether one acquires the family by birth or marriage— other than disappearing one night. Although that would disgrace the family, maybe the only way to freedom lies there.

Class *And Quiet Rolls the Dawn* is a fairly realistic representation of Bengali lower-middle-class lives of the latter half of the 20th century— their values, daily living challenges, attitudes and so on. The tenement house is also a fairly standard living arrangement for these families in that context. Hrishikesh's family of seven occupies two rooms with two beds and half the family presumably sleeps on mattresses laid on the floor. There is no kitchen or private bathroom. One of the more visually memorable images is when the tenants, including Hrishikesh, publicly bathe at the communal water reservoir and the

womenfolk wash dishes and chop vegetables nearby. There is no pretence of privacy or personal space in these circumstances and that goes for people's attitudes as well. The neighbours are nosy and judgemental as typical of their context and class, whether in slandering Chinu or defending her character—her lateness is the news of the week for that quiet and humdrum house. Only Shyamal, who is possibly a school or college teacher (he reads books all the time), reserves judgement and tries to help Hrishikesh's family without any expectations, though his wife does not approve. The landlord, Dwarik Mallick, is also a typical character here— and possibly the last "villain" or class traitor— in Sen's films. His ire stems from the fact that he has not been able to raise rents according to market rates nor evict his long-term tenants, a situation that was also fairly common at that time. This is compounded with his surly and grumpy character; we never once see him smile or behave kindly with anyone. He scowls and then slowly confronts a random man for urinating in front of the house or berate Hrishikesh for using too much water, or, of course, demand that Hrishikesh leave with his family while slandering Chinu's character and almost calling her a prostitute. In contrast, Tapu's friend, who owns his own motorbike and takes Tapu to the police station, morgue and hospital at a moment's notice, is more generous-minded, if not wealthier. He jokingly asks Tapu for gas money but then pays for it himself, not to mention driving him around all night.



Gender Roles Although *And Quiet Rolls the Dawn* was never marketed as a feminist film, it certainly sheds light on and reveals the constraints faced by working women from a leftist perspective. The unfolding of the entire combined emotional charge of the characters highlights the inherent injustice that informs Chinu's struggle. But what the film *does not* do is directly pinpoint and/or attempt to reform any of these injustices and/or improve societal conditions of the working woman. In this, the film is both realistic and thought-provoking. The Bengali lower-middle class holds an abundance of deeply conservative *bhadralok* values, especially when it comes to circumscribing women's' roles in society, and to some degree, men's as well. Chinu is expected to do the man's job but always remains bound by patriarchal hypocrisy; she has no real agency or freedom and must always keep her family informed of her whereabouts. On her lateness, the first thought is that she might be visiting relatives in another city, i.e., remaining within the bounds of patriarchal family structure. Otherwise, in the context, a woman staying out late equals loss of life or respectability or both— from accident to elopement to suicide to kidnapping/ trafficking/ rape/ prostitution and so on. And it must always be the male members, fathers and brothers, who go in search of the missing woman, ostensibly because the spaces they need to visit are unsavoury and not "safe" for women— police station, morgue, hospital etc.— an opinion widely held to this day. And to top it off, of course, Chinu isn't allowed to provide a single counterargument or even confront Dwarik directly when he slanders her and calls her a prostitute in all but name. She is firmly told to go inside quietly while her good-for-nothing, generally irresponsible younger brother Tapu "defends" her honour and comes to blows with Dwarik. This is not to say that masculinity is a unidimensional construct in the

film— Tapu's vulnerabilities in particular are exposed in the scene where he is completely overwhelmed and vomits immediately after visiting the morgue. And Hrishikesh is always shown as a mild-mannered, vulnerable, ageing man. Regardless, within the overall framework of the film and the context it presents, it seems that none of these characters is dealt an even hand, and women (Chinu and Minu) suffer the brunt of it.

Selflessness/Selfishness The selfishness vs selflessness question creates a rift between Minu and Maa and is a turning point in the emotional landscape of the film. Minu openly accuses her parents for being selfish towards Chinu in that they have kept her from getting married and starting her own family. However, in the context of the story, that may not be the entire picture. For one thing, Minu does not consider fully that Chinu, like any daughter, has some filial responsibility towards her parents, whether or not she's married. The parents spent their entire lives raising their children as best as they could, and Maa in particular has herself been selflessly devoting all her energies towards them— except of course it's unpaid labour and hence underappreciated. So, whether or not Chinu's daily grind is vastly in excess of filial duty is open to question: if she had been a model son instead, the question of marrying out of the family wouldn't arise because a son would be expected work *and* bring home a wife to lessen the mother's burden. Further, not a single character alleges that Chinu herself is unhappy with this responsibility; indeed, they all praise her for being a patient, dutiful and responsible daughter who never complains. Chinu's own opinions are not presented in the film; while she is hurt at the accusations levelled at her, that is more a trust issue instead of a selfishness/selflessness issue and, in any case, largely a fallout of public perception. In fact, it may well be that her only relationship, which ended with her lover's death, has scarred Chinu enough to not actively seek out marriage at that stage in her life and she's content to further her career instead. So Minu's own resentments, like not being able to marry before her older sister or being responsible for her family in case Chinu abandons them, are most likely heightened by the crisis situation and she reads more into the selfishness/ selflessness question than is warranted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1) Who is the most striking character in the film to you and why? Discuss with examples.

2) What rifts does the situation expose in the family structure? Are these irrevocable? Why or why not?

3) In your view, is this a feminist film? Which facets of "femininity" and "masculinity" are the most explored/exposed here? Discuss.

4) Do you think it is important to know or conjecture about Chinu's whereabouts and the reason for her lateness?

5) Do you think the film works as a successful mystery? Why or why not?

SCENES

Children Playing A man pulls a rickshaw down a narrow road. Boys drink water from a street hand pump tubewell, taking a break from playing football on the street. One of the boys, Poltu, is bleeding. Minu, his middle-older sister, takes him to the dispensary. The pharmacists shoo away the crowd of other boys who came with them. Poltu had to get three stitches, a pharmacist whispers to Minu. The doctor tells Poltu that it's absolutely fine to get an injury or two at his age and to continue being precocious and active.





At home At an old dilapidated house, Minu tends to Poltu while their mother does household chores. Both Poltu and another sister, Jhinu, ask Minu when their oldest sister, Chinu, will return. It's already 7:30 pm. Poltu wants to sleep next to Chinu on the bed and not with their mother, as he loves the stories she reads out to him. Poltu and Minu jokingly argue.





The house The voice-over narrator details the history of the house while we see some of the residents. Built by Babu Nabinchandra Mallick during the Sepoy Mutiny (First War of Independence, 1857-1859), the house has witnessed the ups and downs of Kolkata's history. Now it is a tenement house, with rooms rented out to many families, one of which is Chinu's family.



Chinu's family Chinu's father, Hrishikesh Sengupta, bathes at a public/communal water tub while the narrator says that he came there with a small daughter 23 years ago. His family now numbers seven and he has retired from his job; his meagre pension pays little more than the rent.



The landlord The landlord, Dwarik Mallik, chastises Hrishikesh for wasting too much water. He is unhappy as he can't raise the rents of all these tenants who have occupied the rooms for 20-30 years while prices of everything else keep rising. On his way out, he sees a random passer-by urinating on the wall and confronts him, but the other man says "sorry" and escapes.



Waiting for their eldest daughter The family rushes to a window after hearing a discomfiting chant ("*Bolo Hori, Hori Bol*") uttered while a dead body is being transported to the crematorium. Hrishikesh tells his wife that he is worried that Chinu hadn't returned from work yet. Minu says she might be held up in traffic. In a jam-packed bus, Chinu somehow finds a place to sit. She works at a 10-5 job and is the sole breadwinner of the family, the narrator states.



At the pharmacy At home, Minu opines that their parents have no grounds to worry about why Chinu hadn't returned past 9 pm as they sent their daughter out to work. Minu goes to the pharmacy to make a phone call to Chinu's office but the call doesn't connect. The pharmacists, Dwarik and some random customers appear shocked that a young woman isn't back home that late at night.



More Waiting The parents keep waiting and worrying. The mother shouts at the youngest daughter, Jhinu, for not getting her food herself. An elderly lady, another resident, asks Minu where she went late at night to make the telephone call. Minu gives a vague reply, but reports to her parents that there was no one at Chinu's office and not to wait for their eldest brother, Tapu. Tapu suddenly returns, shouting, and tries to fix a nail on his shoe with the kitchen pestle, much to the mother's annoyance.



The night goes on Hrishikesh waits at the tram stop and the last tram passes, but Chinu isn't on it. Maa and Minu keep watch at the door. Dwarik asks them to lock the main door as Hrishikesh isn't back yet. Hrishikesh returns after a while but there is no sign of Chinu.

Tenants gossip One of the other residents in the house, whom Hrishikesh met at the tram stop, discusses Chinu's lateness with his wife— she could well have been in an accident. Another tenant, an old man, is certain that she eloped with some boy, but his granddaughter objects. Women should stay in their place, he says, but the granddaughter argues that Chinu is working like a man. A third tenant, Shyamal, reading a book, is annoyed that the grandfather is yelling and complaining. His wife, putting their toddler to bed, says that he shouldn't interfere and offer his help in finding Chinu.





A living Hell A few women have gathered in Hrishikesh's room. One of them tells horrific news stories of women missing and murdered. Poltu cannot sleep. Minu lays a mattress on the floor, chasing away the other ladies— it's a "living hell", she says, where everyone is laughing at her sister's expense. Hrishikesh is concerned that everyone knows that their daughter is missing. Maa starts sobbing and Minu tries to console her, to no avail.



At the police station Tapu finds a friend and then gets a ride from him to the police station on his motorbike, both of them speculating about Chinu's whereabouts. The pharmacy phone rings, but the pharmacist sleeping there takes it off the hook and doesn't answer Sometime later at home, the mother wakes up from a nap but collapses from exhaustion soon after. At the police station, an officer tells his colleagues about how he just arrested a couple of smugglers and prostitutes. Another officer makes a phone call, detailing Chinu's description. He tells Tapu and his friend that he couldn't get any news. The first officer gives them a letter and sends them to the morgue.



The tenants check on the family Shyamal checks in on the family. The elderly lady is also waiting in the courtyard. Minu says there is no news yet. The old man's granddaughter comes downstairs to keep the old lady company. The old lady says that Chinu is a dutiful and responsible daughter and that everyone is slandering her in a time of crisis.



At the morgue Tapu is shown some corpses. The caretaker is annoyed to show him around and keeps complaining, "This one won't do either", while opening successive freezer boxes. Tapu emerges from the morgue and vomits. His friend calls him "effeminate" for reacting so strongly. Tapu gets furious and tells his friend to leave, but his friend waits for him to cool off and gives him a ride again. Hrishikesh sits, huddled, in front of a black screen for a few moments.



At the hospital Hrishikesh and Shyamal head to the hospital. Tapu and his friend also reach the hospital and wait along with some other families worried for their missing daughters, sisters and granddaughters. But the girl dies from her injuries. Shyamal and the others rush to identify the body— it isn't Chinu but another man's divorcee sister. Newspaper headlines about women being murdered and trafficked appear on the night cityscape.



Questions for Chinu In a short non-narrative sequence, with Chinu standing in front of a cream-coloured screen/wall, the family members are heard (off-screen) rejoicing at Chinu's success at finding a job. They ask her for things they want and Chinu agrees to get them. Only Minu is silent. Chinu tells Minu to focus on her studies and not to worry about earning money.





Police officers come to the house to investigate. They ask Minu about Chinu's appearance, personality and personal affairs. Minu reveals that she was in a previous relationship, but her boyfriend was accidentally killed by police fire some time ago. The police bring news of a pregnant woman who tried to commit suicide by jumping off a train and is currently at a hospital.



Minu's Anger Shyamal leaves the family to rest and reprimands other nosy residents to not bother them. The family members make small talk. Minu tells Tapu that the house is like a morgue. They have always been selfish and never bothered about Chinu; they are now again selfishly concerned about their own selves rather than her. Minu accuses her parents of not making any effort to get Chinu married (since she's the sole breadwinner). Her now-deceased boyfriend also wanted her to work and pay his bills, just like the family does, argues Minu, countering her mother's protests. Hrishikesh is stunned and leaves the room. Minu continues to lay out their future trajectory where the same fate that befell Chinu would befall her. She finally starts crying, blaming Chinu for abandoning them.



Chinu returns. She behaves normally and tries to reassure her family. But Maa and Tapu tell her not to make a laughing stock of the family by standing outside. She expresses her pain to Minu about being treated disrespectfully and unfairly no one gave her a chance to explain and didn't bother to trust her.



A confrontation Dwarik stomps downstairs while all the tenants are watching. He insults a silent Hrishikesh and tells him that as the landlord, he cannot allow such indecent behaviour in a middle-class house and for him to vacate the room. "This is a *bhadralok*'s house", he says. Tapu confronts him and Chinu also begs that they hear her side of the story. But she's rudely told to go inside. The men start shouting and throwing punches. After they disperse, Chinu sits alone and despondent. The parents look on, sad but understanding. Minu tries to talk to Chinu and get her to rest. Chinu sobs as dawn rolls over the city.





Next morning the tenants are bathing, washing dishes, breaking coal and doing other chores. Life continues for them as usual. Maa lights the clay stove, paying no attention to the voluminous, gushing smoke.

