



The Lady in The Garden of Illusions: A Spinster's Framed Authority in Rituparno Ghosh's Film, *The Lady of the House*

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Abstract

Rituparno Ghosh's film *Bariwali (The Lady of the House)* throws ample light on a middle-aged, lonely spinster's (Banalata) unrequited marital bliss or ungratified sexual desire that has been pent up and isolated in the cooped-up atmosphere of her sprawling estate, *Mohini Malancha* (Garden of Illusions). She kept to herself until Dipankar, a charming director, stepped into the vicinity of the said estate (her coiled self), and let her preconscious desires unravel completely. Eventually, it seems that Banalata stands in a liminal space for being a spinster (neither a wife, nor a widow). My paper would like to show how turning a spinster into the lady of the house inside the walls of a sprawling estate called *Mohini Malancha* (The Garden of Illusions) could be interpreted as a layered conspiracy of the *new patriarchy*. Moreover, the paper would like to trace how a liminal character's (spinster) sexual agency could pose a threat to weak patterns of patriarchy. Finally, my paper would like to argue how Ghosh decodes the received notions of a middle-age unmarried woman by peeping into her subliminal erotic desires but dares not to radicalize Banalata further and ends up in a womanist discourse.

Keywords: Patriarchy, Spinster, Dreams, Sexuality, Womanist Discourse.