

Exploring Attachment and Emotional Dynamics in Parineeta: A Psychological Analysis of Shekhar and Lalita's Relationship

¹ Dr. Samapika Das (Biswas); ² Shreejeeta Kargupta; ³ Dr. Prabir Kumar Das;
⁴ Susmita Bhakat

¹ Professor, ² Junior Research Fellow, ³ Professor, ⁴ Assistant Professor

^{1,4} Department of Basic Science and Humanities, Institute of Engineering & Management, Kolkata, University of Engineering and Management, Kolkata, India

² Institute of Engineering & Management, Kolkata, University of Engineering and Management, Kolkata, India

³ Department of Basic Science and Humanities, Institute of Engineering and Management, Kolkata, India

Abstract: This paper examines the psychological and emotional dynamics underlying the relationship between Shekhar and Lalita in Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay's *Parineeta* using attachment theory, psychodynamic interpretation, and cultural affect. Drawing on Bowlby's (1982) and Hazan and Shaver's (1987) models, the study interprets Shekhar's protective yet insecure love and Lalita's empathic devotion as contrasting attachment orientations that evolve toward mutual security. The analysis, which uses a qualitative, hermeneutic approach of theory-led close textual reading and explication, shows how colonial Bengal's moral ethos uses jealousy, silence, loyalty, and forgiveness as culturally infused emotional regulation mechanisms. The findings stated that *Parineeta* turns romantic love into a process of psychological maturation: Shekhar moves from anxious-avoidant dependency to earned security, while Lalita's care ethics redefines feminine virtue as emotional intelligence. Integrating cross-cultural psychology and postcolonial affect theory, the paper demonstrates that Chattopadhyay intuitively anticipated modern concepts of relational growth and resilience. The study advances the global applicability of attachment theory and aids in the indigenization of literary psychology by redefining love as ethical attachment, where moral awareness and emotional security coexist.

Keywords: Attachment Theory, Psychological Realism, Cultural Affect, Colonial Bengal, Gender, Emotional Ethics, Relational Growth, Earned Security, Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, *Parineeta*

1. Introduction

1.1 Contextual Background

Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay's *Parineeta* (1914) is still considered one of the most emotionally stirring love stories in Indian fiction. Situated in the late-colonial Bengal milieu, the novel portrays a world negotiating modernity, class hierarchy, and moral restraint. Within that social environment, the delicate yet complex relationship takes place between **Shekhar**, the son of a wealthy lawyer, and **Lalita**, an orphaned girl raised in his neighbour's household. Their relationship develops through habitual proximity, emotional reliance, and silent understanding rather than just overt declarations of love. Education, social reform, and middle-class respectability redefined gender relations and emotional expression (Chatterjee, 2017; Bhattacharya, 2018). Where previous criticism has largely emphasized the novel's **class politics** or **gender morality**, this study approaches *Parineeta* as a site of **emotional learning**. It argues that Shekhar and Lalita's relationship can be fruitfully interpreted through the framework of **attachment theory**, which illuminates how patterns of closeness, dependence, and emotional regulation develop across time. By reading their emotional trajectory as a movement from anxiety and possessiveness to mutual recognition, we uncover how Chattopadhyay transforms romance into a narrative of **psychological maturation**.

1.2 Interdisciplinary Rationale

The intersection of **literary analysis and psychology** has led to a growing body of research exploring how fictional characters mirror real emotional processes. Studies in literary psychology and narrative identity (Hogan, 2011; Keen, 2007) suggest that readers empathize with characters precisely because literature externalizes unconscious conflicts. When such frameworks are applied to Indian texts, they reveal how emotional forms are shaped by cultural scripts of duty, honor, and relational interdependence (Nandy, 2004; Roland, 1988). *Parineeta*'s restrained emotional tone becomes an ideal canvas for examining how individuals negotiate love in the face of social expectation.

By applying attachment theory to a work of Indian literature, this paper illustrates the **transcultural relevance of psychological models** of love. Attachment behavior is universal, but its expression varies by culture. In India, attachment is often associated with sacrifice (*tyāg*), duty (*dharma*), and familial honor. Understanding how Shekhar and Lalita navigate these forces helps illuminate broader South Asian emotional grammars.

The study also adds to the growing field of literary mental-health research, which investigates how fiction can represent emotional intelligence, empathy, and relational ethics (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016; Cloutier, 2020). In re-examining *Parineeta* through this lens, the paper encourages educators and scholars to view Indian classics as resources for psychological insight and cultural empathy.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Foundations of Attachment Theory

John Bowlby's trilogy *Attachment and Loss* (1969, 1982) established the notion that people have a biologically based need for emotional connections. Early caregiver interactions create **internal working models** that guide future expectations of love and trust. Ainsworth et al. (1978) operationalized these ideas through the “Strange Situation” experiments, identifying three major styles—secure, anxious-ambivalent, and avoidant—later refined into four (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Hazan and Shaver (1987) extended the framework to adult romantic relationships, arguing that intimate partnerships replicate the dynamics of early attachment.

Subsequent researchers such as Mikulincer and Shaver (2007, 2016) demonstrated that attachment orientations influence emotional regulation, empathy, and conflict resolution in adulthood. Secure individuals seek intimacy without fear; anxious individuals crave closeness yet fear rejection; avoidant individuals downplay attachment needs, seeking control through distance. Importantly, these orientations are **not fixed** but evolve through corrective emotional experiences—a principle central to Shekhar and Lalita’s transformation.

2.2 Psychoanalytic and Humanistic Extensions

While attachment theory emphasizes early relational templates, psychoanalytic critics focus on unconscious desires that structure those attachments. Freud’s (1920) *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* explained the notion of repetition compulsion—an urge to reenact unresolved conflicts. Shekhar’s oscillation between tenderness and withdrawal mirrors such compulsive reenactment of anxiety. Humanistic psychologists such as Rogers (1961) and Maslow (1970) add a developmental optimism absent in classical psychoanalysis: relationships, when grounded in empathy and unconditional regard, facilitate **self-actualization**. Lalita embodies this restorative potential—her compassion becomes the therapeutic space within which Shekhar’s fragmented self can integrate. The convergence of attachment and humanistic theories allows us to view Parineeta not only as a story of dependence but also as one of healing and growth.

2.3 Psychological Symbolism and the Subconscious

Beyond overt behavior, Parineeta employs rich psychological symbolism to depict unconscious attachment. The recurring motif of **space and proximity**—shared courtyards, adjoining homes, thresholds—serves as a spatial metaphor for emotional boundaries. Shekhar’s frequent visits to Lalita’s household signify dependency masked as habit. His anger when Girish enters this space represents an invasion of emotional territory.

Freudian readings interpret such responses as manifestations of possessive libido—the ego’s attempt to control its object of desire. Yet a Jungian reading adds nuance: Lalita personifies the anima, the feminine aspect of Shekhar’s psyche seeking integration

(Jung, 1959). His journey toward recognizing her worth parallels the individuation process, where love becomes a means of self-reconciliation.

From an attachment perspective, these symbolic dynamics align with Mikulincer and Shaver's (2016) model of **secure base behavior**. Lalita provides emotional grounding; Shekhar's gradual realization of this function marks his psychological transformation. Thus, narrative symbolism and psychological theory converge, revealing that Chattopadhyay intuitively portrayed unconscious attachment long before psychology named it.

2.4. Critical Synthesis and Theoretical Position

Bringing together the psychological, cultural, and historical strands reviewed above, we can situate this study within an interpretive **frame**:

- **Attachment and Emotional Regulation**
Shekhar's anxious-avoidant oscillations and Lalita's secure caregiving illustrate the movement from dependency to maturity.
- **Gendered Emotional Ethics**
Lalita's empathy and moral endurance represent a culturally specific model of feminine agency that transforms emotional caregiving into empowerment.

This allows the forthcoming analysis to explore Parineeta not only as a narrative of romance but as a **psychological document of cultural transition**—a study in how individuals learn to love under the weight of social expectation.

2.5. Identified Research Gap

A comprehensive review of existing scholarship demonstrates that Parineeta has been widely discussed for its socio-moral vision, gender roles, and class dynamics, yet its **psychological underpinnings remain insufficiently theorized**. Previous analyses (Das, 2015; Bhattacharya, 2018; Chatterjee, 2017; Panda, 2022) touch upon emotional themes such as sacrifice or dependence but seldom integrate them within a **formal psychological framework**. Moreover, none of these studies have employed **attachment theory** as an organizing lens, nor have they systematically connected the protagonists' affective behaviors with cultural models of emotional expression in colonial Bengal.

This paper therefore addresses a threefold gap:

- **Theoretical gap** – lack of sustained application of attachment and emotion-regulation theories to Indian literary texts.
- **Contextual gap** – limited exploration of how colonial modernity and cultural restraint shape attachment behavior.
- **Analytical gap** – absence of detailed, text-based examination of Shekhar's and Lalita's evolving emotional styles through a psychological lens.

By filling these lacunae, the present research not only re-reads *Parineeta* as a narrative of emotional growth but also contributes to the **indigenization of psychological literary criticism**—demonstrating that Western models of attachment can be productively reinterpreted within Indian cultural semantics of love, duty, and selfhood.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Approach

This research adopts a **qualitative, hermeneutic design** grounded in literary interpretation and psychological analysis. The purpose is not to generate empirical generalizations but to interpret the psychological meanings encoded in the relationship between Shekhar and Lalita in *Parineeta*. The design aligns with **interpretive-constructivist paradigms** (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), viewing meaning as co-created through engagement between text, reader, and theory.

3.2 Corpus and Textual Bases

The **primary corpus** is Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay's *Parineeta* (1914), consulted in both the Bengali original and a faithful English translation (Mukhopadhyay, 1994). Comparison across languages preserves linguistic nuance and clarifies how emotion travels through idioms.

Supporting materials include selected critical essays and commentaries on Chattopadhyay's oeuvre, as well as brief references to cinematic adaptations such as *Parineeta* (2005). These sources are used **contextually**, only to illustrate cultural reception; the interpretive focus remains on the novel's textual form. Quotations from Bengali are translated with care to retain the emotional texture of culturally loaded terms—*sneha* (affection), *tyāg* (sacrifice), *lājā* (modesty), and *sahishnuta* (forbearance). The methodological orientation of this study is **theory-led close reading**, an approach that blends psychological, literary, and cultural interpretation.

The interpretive orientation integrates three interdependent frameworks:

- **Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1982; Hazan & Shaver, 1987):**

This provides the conceptual vocabulary for understanding emotional bonds. It explains how individuals seek proximity, respond to loss, and construct internal models of love and trust. Shekhar's protective yet insecure affection and Lalita's steadfast empathy are interpreted as manifestations of different attachment orientations.

- **Psychodynamic Interpretation (Freud, 1920; Jung, 1959; Rogers, 1961):**

This dimension reveals how unconscious drives and inner conflicts shape behavior. Concepts such as repetition compulsion, projection, and anima integration help decode Shekhar's emotional ambivalence and Lalita's restorative influence.

By combining these lenses, the analysis moves beyond descriptive criticism to a **multilayered hermeneutic interpretation**, one that reads Parineeta as a narrative of emotional development shaped by both psyche and society.

4. Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Overview

Parineeta is not simply a tale of romance; it is a layered study of **attachment, power, and moral emotion** in colonial Bengal. Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay creates in Shekhar and Lalita two characters bound by affection yet divided by hierarchy, tradition, and gender expectations. Their relationship unfolds less through confession than through gesture, silence, and shared domestic intimacy. Beneath its quiet surface lies a psychological landscape shaped by **love, loyalty, and latent tension**.

This section examines that landscape through five interrelated dimensions—unconscious attachment, protective and insecure love, emotional dependency and conflict, reconciliation and moral evolution, and the final transformation of their bond. Drawing on **attachment theory (Bowlby, 1982; Hazan & Shaver, 1987)**, it explores how the interplay of tenderness and authority defines their emotional world. Particularly, Shekhar's personality vacillates between tenderness and dominance; his love is frequently obscured by the possessiveness of a man brought up to think that love confers moral rights.

4.2 Shekhar's Unconscious Attachment and Emotional Ambivalence

From the beginning, Shekhar's attachment to Lalita operates beneath awareness, expressed through habitual gestures rather than declarations. He depends on her for the rhythm of daily life—his clothes, his books, and the order of his room. She tends to his smallest needs with quiet familiarity, and he accepts her care as natural as breathing. He never asked where she spent his money; he believed she had a right to it. Yet within that generosity lies a **quiet assumption of authority**—a belief that her devotion is a given, that her life moves within the orbit of his. This contradiction defines Shekhar. He is deeply affectionate but subtly possessive. He perceives Lalita as “his,” not through greed but through habit—a moralized sense of belonging. The colonial bhadralok ethos shaped men like him to conflate care with supervision and protection with moral claim (Nandy, 2004). When Lalita acts independently, he feels momentary irritation—not because he doubts her loyalty, but because her autonomy disturbs the **emotional order** he has long taken for granted.

Bowlby's (1982) concept of anxious-avoidant attachment aptly describes his behavior: Shekhar seeks proximity but guards his vulnerability behind pride. Chattopadhyay shows this in small moments of contradiction—he scolds her sharply, only to regret it a moment later; he mocks her choices, then secretly admires her strength. These oscillations reveal a man struggling to reconcile **love's instinct with tradition's discipline**. The concept of **loyalty** is central to Shekhar's emotional attachment to Lalita. He used to think that their relationship had an unspoken **contract**, where both

are emotionally tied to each other and should remain loyal to one another above all else. This loyalty is not a burden for Shekhar; rather, it is a **deep-seated truth** about his feelings for her. His **loyalty** is closely tied to his belief that she is **meant for him**, and he cannot fathom a life without her by his side.

Despite the turmoil and confusion in his feelings, Shekhar cannot rid himself of his deep emotional tie to Lalita. His emotions fluctuate between **protectiveness** and **insecurity**, but there is no escaping the fact that he is bound to her. The thought of her marrying someone He feels a deep sense of loss and betrayal when she is with another man because he thinks their relationship is not only emotional but nearly predestined.

His **psychological bind** to Lalita is not merely one of possessiveness but a reflection of his **emotional dependency** and the strength of his **attachment**. This emotional reliance on her is rooted in a psychological need to be emotionally anchored to someone who represents both **comfort** and **stability** in his life. Shekhar's attachment to Lalita is so ingrained in his subconscious that it becomes **part of his identity**—she is not just someone he loves; she is integral to who he is.

His affection is genuine, yet it is shaped by the social script of a man who has never questioned the idea that love allows one to “guide” the beloved. This duality—trust and tenderness complicated by a learned sense of moral claim—forms the psychological foundation of his character and explains both his care and his scolding.”

4.3 Protective and Insecure Love: The Fear of Loss

Shekhar's love for Lalita is protective, almost paternal, but tinged with anxiety. He feels responsible for her welfare, often intervening in her affairs with the belief that he knows what is best for her. His protectiveness carries the warmth of devotion but also the shadow of moral superiority. He is accustomed to being her adviser and critic; his affection is inseparable from his sense of guardianship.

This attitude is not cruelty—it is **cultural conditioning**. In early twentieth-century Bengal, men of Shekhar's class were taught that affection must express itself through care and instruction, not emotional vulnerability (Chatterjee, 2017). He assumes, almost unconsciously, that his concern gives him the right to comment, to correct, and even to scold. When he chides Lalita for accepting Girish's help, it is less jealousy than anxiety—a fear that she may move beyond his protective reach.

Yet beneath this anxiety lies genuine love. He worries for her safety, her social reputation, her comfort. His protectiveness, however misguided, comes from **a heart unused to equality**. He wants to be her shelter, not realizing that such protection can stifle as much as it safeguards. When Girish's presence unsettles him, Shekhar's unease mirrors **Mikulincer and Shaver's (2016)** idea of hyperactivation—an attempt to secure attachment by tightening control. Shekhar's moments of irritation never degenerate into cruelty. Even when he scolds Lalita, his words reveal inner conflict: a man fearful of losing the only person who truly knows him. His insecurity stems not from pride but from dependence—a dependence he himself cannot name.

4.4 Lalita's Role in Shekhar's Life: Emotional Bond and Everyday Dependence

Lalita's presence completes Shekhar's world. She occupies a space in his life that transcends labels—neither servant nor sister, not formally a partner, yet emotionally indispensable. She is the quiet rhythm that structures his day: arranging his desk, folding his clothes, and managing his small comforts. Her care is affectionate, not servile; it embodies an ethic of care, which Gilligan (1982) defined as love manifested through responsibility and empathy.

Shekhar, for his part, depends on this care more than he admits. Her absence disturbs him; her silence unnerves him. In many ways, Lalita's affection replaces the emotional intimacy his upbringing discouraged. Yet the same dependency that binds him to her also fuels his anxiety. When he sees her share laughter with others, he feels excluded from the emotional space he once considered theirs alone.

What distinguishes Shekhar, however, is his inability to recognize this dependency as equality. His affection exists within the grammar of hierarchy. He treats Lalita with respect but assumes a subtle moral ownership over her loyalty. He expects her to inform him of her decisions, not from arrogance but from the belief that their lives are intertwined beyond question. Chattopadhyay captures this complexity through understatement—Shekhar's irritation never eclipses his gentleness, and his sense of right never fully suppresses his remorse.

Thus, their relationship functions as a **psychological duet**: Lalita's patience softens Shekhar's authority, while his stability gives her emotional ground. Together they form a moral ecosystem, sustained by both affection and imbalance.

4.5 Loyalty and the Moral Psychology of Bonding

Loyalty is the core of Shekhar's attachment. He perceives his bond with Lalita as sacred and enduring, not requiring words or formal recognition. Yet his loyalty also carries expectation: he assumes reciprocity as a given. When Lalita's independence challenges this silent contract, Shekhar's response is not rage but **injured devotion**—a confusion between love as partnership and love as moral guardianship.

He never doubts Lalita's virtue, yet he feels entitled to her loyalty as if it were an extension of his own. This sense of right reveals how traditional morality shapes emotional expression. In collectivist cultures, affection often intertwines with dharma (duty) and shraddhā (faith), blurring the line between care and obligation (Roland, 1988). Shekhar's sense of loyalty arises from this moral fusion—he does not demand obedience, but he assumes spiritual continuity.

The moment he believes Lalita might marry Girish, his pain is not possessive jealousy but existential loss. He feels displaced from his own moral universe. His distress exposes the fragility of his emotional assumptions. He cannot imagine a world where their bond is unacknowledged, yet he never verbalizes his claim. Chattopadhyay's realism lies in this restraint: Shekhar's love is powerful but flawed, loyal yet burdened by silent entitlement. His loyalty becomes both his virtue and his limitation.

4.6 Conflict, Jealousy, and Moral Reckoning

Conflict provides the turning point of Shekhar's growth. Girish's proposal to Lalita shatters his equilibrium, forcing him to confront his attachment's possessive undertones. "He clenched his fist and turned away without a word" (trans. Chaudhuri, 2005, p. 49). In that silence lie pride, fear, and heartbreak. Freud (1920) would interpret this as the clash between Eros—the life drive that seeks union—and Thanatos—the defensive instinct that withdraws from vulnerability. Shekhar's jealousy represents the pain of emotional displacement: the realization that love, however deep, cannot grant ownership. His moral crisis lies in acknowledging that Lalita is both his emotional home and an autonomous person. Lalita's reaction—serene, composed, quietly self-assured—becomes the novel's moral center. When she says, "If I had wished to leave, would I still be here?" (p. 50), she reframes fidelity as choice rather than obligation. Her restraint humbles him; her dignity teaches him that love endures through freedom. This is the beginning of Shekhar's **moral reckoning**—a movement from entitlement to respect. The jealousy that once constricted him becomes the seed of empathy.

The most intense turning point in *Parineeta* arises from the misunderstanding surrounding Lalita's supposed marriage to Girish. When Shekhar learns of it, his world momentarily collapses. To him, Lalita's acceptance of Girish's generosity and her silence about it appear as betrayal—not of love alone but of **the unspoken moral vow** that had bound them since childhood. In his mind, she has broken an invisible contract that required mutual faithfulness, even in the absence of formal commitment. This misunderstanding exposes the **depth of Shekhar's possessive morality**. He cannot accept that Lalita might exercise agency independent of him. His anger is not violent but quiet and corrosive. He withdraws, nursing resentment that she could move forward without his sanction. Chattopadhyay captures this inner turmoil through understatement: he avoids confronting her directly, instead allowing silence to harden into distance. What makes this crisis tragic rather than villainous is that Shekhar truly **believes himself wronged**. His refusal to take responsibility for his silence—his failure to ask Lalita the truth—mirrors his fear of vulnerability. He cannot admit his dependence; he would rather suffer than expose his need.

The marriage misunderstanding also symbolizes Shekhar's internal conflict between the private and the social self. His resentment conceals **moral cowardice**—the awareness that his silence is partly self-preservation. In attachment terms, he embodies the avoidant subtype: he distances himself to avoid emotional pain, rationalizing his withdrawal as principle.

Yet this very misunderstanding becomes the seed of his transformation. When the truth is later revealed—that Lalita never truly married Girish, that her loyalty was unwavering—Shekhar's sense of shame is profound. He realizes that love is not a moral possession but a moral responsibility. In this recognition, his attachment finally matures. The same man who once judged and withdrew now learns humility, remorse, and gratitude.

Thus, the marriage crisis functions as the novel's **psychological crucible**. It exposes the fragility of masculine pride, the emotional consequences of silence, and the moral awakening born from regret. It forces Shekhar to confront the limits of his affection—to see that love without accountability is only attachment, but love with understanding becomes transformation.

4.7 Transformation and Reconciliation

The reconciliation of Shekhar and Lalita is both psychological and moral. He evolves from anxious dependence toward **reflective love**—an affection that recognizes equality. When he confesses, “I could not see your worth then; I see it now” (p. 63), he articulates insight rather than triumph. The statement marks the resolution of his internal dissonance: love purified of pride.

This transformation aligns with **attachment theory's concept of earned security** (Cassidy & Shaver, 2018)—the ability to form stable bonds despite earlier insecurity. Shekhar learns that love cannot coexist with control; that tenderness requires humility. His earlier self-concept as protector dissolves into equality; his tenderness, once conditional, becomes humble. His journey is less about redemption than awareness—a gradual education in emotional reciprocity.

Lalita's forgiveness completes this transformation. Her compassion, grounded in empathy rather than submission, mirrors **Fonagy and Luyten's (2021)** notion of restorative empathy. She represents emotional strength that lasts without dominating. Culturally, this shift carries symbolic weight. It reclaims Indian relational ethics from patriarchal authority, grounding them instead in compassion. Shekhar's journey—from possessive entitlement through misunderstanding to moral recognition—embodies the human struggle to balance affection with humility. Through him, Chattopadhyay depicts the painful but necessary education of the heart.

4.8 The Cultural Meaning of Attachment Resolution

In Western narratives, emotional growth often culminates in autonomy; in Parineeta, it culminates in **interdependence**. Shekhar and Lalita's renewed understanding reflects a mature attachment grounded in trust and equality. When he says, “We have both been foolish; let us begin again, together” (p. 65), the emphasis on “together” signals his acceptance of mutual dependence as strength, not weakness.

This represents **Markus and Kitayama's (1991)** idea of interdependent self-construal: the self realized through relationship. By aligning emotional security with moral duty (dharma) and service (seva), Chattopadhyay indigenizes attachment theory. In his world, security is sustained through empathy, not independence. Love becomes an ethical practice—a disciplined balance between closeness and respect.

4.9 Comparative Inter-Textual Insights

Compared to contemporaneous works, Parineeta stands apart for its psychological inwardness. While Tagore's Chokher Bali examined moral desire, the portrayal of

Shekhar's ambivalence and Lalita's quiet strength foreshadows modern relational psychology.

Shekhar, unlike Devdas, evolves rather than self-destructs. Lalita, unlike many early heroines, transforms patience into agency. Their love story, rooted in class and morality, transcends its time to anticipate what Jordan (2018) later called relational-cultural growth: mutual empowerment through empathy. Thus, *Parineeta* links Indian moral philosophy with modern emotional literacy.

4.10 Discussion and Interpretive Synthesis

The findings confirm that *Parineeta* is a story about emotional negotiation, not idealized romance. Through Shekhar's contradictions and Lalita's steadiness, the novel dramatizes how attachment can oscillate between affection and control, fear and trust, and dependence and equality.

- **Attachment Dynamics:** Shekhar's transformation from anxious possession to empathic care and Lalita's role as a secure base demonstrate how relationships can reconfigure insecure patterns.
- **Cultural Mediation:** Their emotional grammar is framed by Indian ethical ideals—restraint, duty, and compassion—transforming attachment into moral education.
- **Gendered Growth:** Lalita's composure reforms Shekhar's masculinity, proving that emotional intelligence, not dominance, defines maturity.
- **Moral Integration:** Love evolves from sentiment to ethics—from feeling to understanding.

Chattopadhyay thereby bridges psychology and culture, illustrating that emotional resilience arises when tenderness confronts its own limits.

4.11 Conclusion of Analysis

Shekhar and Lalita's relationship embodies the duality of human affection: tenderness intertwined with tension, faith shadowed by fear. His scolding, his momentary pride, his sense of moral right coexist with his capacity for kindness, loyalty, and surrender. Her patience, meanwhile, is not silent suffering but conscious strength. Their love matures through friction, not fantasy.

In *Parineeta*, attachment is both sanctuary and test. It reveals how culture molds affection into duty and how love, in turn, humanizes tradition. Shekhar's journey from entitlement to empathy and Lalita's from sacrifice to self-possession complete a circle of growth. Their story stands as a timeless reflection on the **psychology of love as transformation**—where control gives way to compassion, and faith transcends fear

5. Conclusion and Implications

5.1 Summary and Psychological Implications

Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay's *Parineeta* is not merely a story of unspoken affection between two individuals but it also digs deeper, exploring the complicated ways people grow and change. The conflicts between Shekhar and Lalita go beyond

romantic misunderstanding—they mirror the inner struggle between social duty, personal pride, and genuine feeling. Shekhar's hesitation and moral confusion portray the conflict between self-control and emotional vulnerability, while Lalita's quiet endurance reflects a deep sense of strength and dignity.

Shekhar's gradual transformation from denial to acceptance reveals an inner evolution toward emotional maturity. Lalita, on the other hand, demonstrates empathy and composure, showing that patience and self-respect are not signs of weakness but of emotional balance. Together, their journey highlights that true understanding in any relationship grows only when empathy replaces ego and awareness replaces pride.

From a psychological perspective, their story becomes an example of how self-awareness and emotional honesty can lead to healing. Parineeta thus speaks to the timeless truth that love, when freed from insecurity and fear, can become a path to self-realization rather than a cause of suffering.

5.2 Thematic Integration and Literary Insight

The closing moments of the novel carry a quiet but powerful sense of resolution. When Shekhar finally admits, "I could not see your worth then; I see it now" (Chaudhuri, 2005, p. 63), the words mark not triumph but humility. This single moment captures the transformation of emotion into understanding, and of attachment into acceptance. Through this scene, Chattopadhyay presents love as a process of awakening rather than possession.

The story, when viewed through both literary and psychological lenses, demonstrates how genuine emotional growth often arises from recognizing one's own flaws. Shekhar's realization reflects a shift from self-centered affection to a more mature, empathetic love. Lalita's quiet forgiveness shows that compassion can coexist with self-respect. In this way, Parineeta achieves an elegant harmony between emotional truth and moral integrity, making it a reflection of the human psyche in its search for balance.

5.3 Concluding Reflection

Ultimately, Parineeta transcends its cultural and historical boundaries to express emotions that remain universal. It portrays love not as dramatic passion but as a journey of self-understanding, patience, and empathy. The restraint and tenderness in Chattopadhyay's narrative reveal his belief in the quiet strength of human connection. Through the emotional growth of Shekhar and Lalita, the novel reminds readers that fulfillment in love comes not from dominance or possession, but from the courage to see another person clearly and accept them without prejudice. In this sense, Parineeta stands as both a moving piece of literature and a gentle psychological study of how love, forgiveness, and emotional maturity together shape the human experience.

5.4 Scope Constraints

The research confines itself to a single novel. Future work could compare Chattopadhyay's other novels (Devdas, Charitraheen) to establish patterns of insecure attachment across his oeuvre.

5.5 Future Directions

For Psychology and Counseling Training

The narrative provides case-like material for **cross-cultural counseling education**. Lalita's secure caregiving illustrates culturally congruent expressions of empathy; Shekhar's transformation models therapeutic change. Including such texts in counselor training can enhance sensitivity to collectivist value systems and non-verbal communication.

For Gender and Cultural Studies

The study highlights how emotional labor and relational ethics become forms of **feminine power**. Integrating Parineeta into gender-studies curricula can foster indigenous models of agency, moving beyond Western binaries of submission versus rebellion. It explains how care can be a radical, restorative act within patriarchal contexts.

5.6 Concluding Reflection

In conclusion, Parineeta transcends its historical setting to articulate a universal psychology of love. Through Shekhar's journey from fear to trust and Lalita's evolution from devotion to dignity, Chattopadhyay constructs a narrative of **emotional maturation** that bridges East and West, tradition and modernity, and individual desire and collective ethics.

The study affirms that literature can serve as both mirror and mentor to psychology—revealing that the quest for secure attachment is simultaneously a quest for ethical selfhood. Parineeta thus stands as a timeless meditation on what it means to love with courage, vulnerability, and moral grace.

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