

# Study of atithi

Business



The interpretive differences of “ Mukti” in Rabindranath Tagore’s short story “ Atithi” and Tapan Sinha’s National Award Winning Film Atithi. The debate on cinematic adaptations of literary works was for many years dominated by the questions of fidelity to the source and by the tendencies to prioritize the literary originals over their film versions (Whelehan 3). In order to be seen as a good adaptation, a film had to come in terms with what was considered as the “ spirit” of the book and to take into account all the layers of the books complexity.

An daptation as interpretation does not have to capture all the nuances of the book’s complexity, but it has to remain a work of art, an independent and convincing creation with its own subtleties of meanings. In other words, it has to remain faithful to the internal logic created by the new vision of the adapted work. Even if the film- maker’s reading of a given literary text clushes [sic] with our reading, we are willing to forgive all the alterations when they spring from a well-thought-out scheme and can lend a persuasive new sense to the text.

Tapan Sinha considered himself an adventurist director and would often work with ew film projects, sometimes switching alternately between indoor and outdoor filming (Mukhopadhyay 113). In his article “ Sahitya o Chalachchitra” (“ Literature and Filming”) he has stated that, while Judging literature as the source, the film adapted from a literary text gains a new dimension Roy 2 when a director reads between the lines of a novel or a play and projects his/her own interpretations in the film (Bandopadhyay 267).

He had responded to Asit Choudhury's suggestion of bringing Tagore into the film from literature (Bandopadhyay 48). The protagonist of Tagore's short story "Atithi" which Tapan Sinha adapted to his National Award Winning Film with the same title, is a young Brahmin boy, Tarapada (played by Parthasarathi Mukherjee), who has an ever curious eye for nature, but remains a stranger, untied and untamed by the bonds of personal love and affection. "The stars under which he was born must have decreed him homeless.

He had spent time with professional yatra-troupes and gymnastics troupe, but had left each new companion once his curiosity has been satiated. He is eventually adopted by a wealthy zamindar, Motilal Babu and his loving wife Annapurna who desire to tie him in a bond of marriage with their only daughter, Charushoshi. However on the previous evening before his nuptial night, Tarapada runs away, to "the unconstraining, unemotional arms of his Mother Earth" (Radice 211) after his two-year stay as an atithi (guest in Bengali), from which the story derives its name.

Most Hindu traditions consider moksha the ultimate goal of life. The other three goals are considered temporary but necessary stepping-stones towards eternal liberation. The main differences of opinion centre on the precise nature of moksha.

According to the Advaita tradition, moksha entails annihilation of the soul's false sense of individuality and realization of its complete non-difference from God. The dualistic traditions claim that God remains ever distinct from the individual soul.

Union in this case refers to a commonality of purpose and realization of one's spiritual nature (Brahman) through surrender and service to the Supreme Brahman ROY 3 (God). Lord Krishna in The Bhagavad Gita 2.

15 says to Arjuna, " O best amongst men, the person who is not disturbed by happiness and distress, and is steady in both, is certainly eligible for liberation. " However for Tagore mukti lies in Baul spirit that celebrates " liberal interpretation of love" (Wikipedia contributors).

Sinha reflected that setting Tarapada free was Tagore's own attempt of achieving mental emancipation (Mukhopadhyay 1 13), being unable to do so as a boy bound at home under the supervision of the family elders of Jorashanko (Bandopadhyay 251). Tarapada's repeated escapades from his village and troupes which he had joined renders to him and the short story the title, " Atithi" (guest). His escape from Motilal Babu's house on the night before his marriage to Charushoshi accentuates the appropriateness of the title Atithi and " The Runaway' [in translation].

Unlike Tagore's Tarapada, Sinha's Tarapada sought freedom in broad daylight.

Following a horse, he reaches the riverbank where his attention is diverted towards the array of boats sailing on the river, carrying singers and entertainers from various regions. We can hear the " overlapping" montage (Bandopadhyay 402) of different regional music, arranged sequentially (Bandopadhyay 252). The combined attraction is so irresistible to tarapada that he leaves behind everything to reach the fair where the entertainers are headed to. Sinha's vision was heavily inspired by Tarashankar

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Bandopadhyays reflection on the word mela, meaning “ fair” in Bengali when used as a noun, but also means “ many’ or “ a lot”, when used as an adjective; a fair unites humans irrespective of faith and creed (Bandopadhyay 252). For Sinha, Tarapada’s quest of freedom is not escaping human relations into the elemental realm of Nature, but “ re- establishing impersonal bonds with Greater Humanity.

” Roy 4 In Sinha’s Atithi’s closing scene, Tarapada is seen Journeying on a boat to the unknown, and playing a flute accompanied by a baul playing Ektara.

The sail of the boat bears a picture of a galloping deer, the vehicle of the Wind-God Vayu, representing freedom and swiftness in hindu mythology (Wikipedia contributors). Tarapada like a deer wants freedom from the mundane bonds and ties which he is afraid of. He wants to be free from the emotional ties and live the life of a wanderer Amidst nature. Coincidentally while he was Journeying with a yatra-troupe ( in Sinha’s Atithi), he was given the role of Abhimanyu, trapped in a whirlpool (the Lotus Barricade), while defending himself against the Kauravas and his Fate by a chariot wheel, trying to break out of the whirlpool.

Tarapada like Abhimanyu was trying hard to break away from the earthly ties. Sinha re-interprets Tarapada’s longing for freedom for freedom by rendering different mythical identities to him. Tarapada’s role as Abhimanyu was not mentioned in Tagore’s “ Atithi” while Sinha does so as to lay emphasis on Tarapada’s yearning for mukti. In the opening scene of Sinha’s Atitni, Tarapada’s younger brother spots him by the sound of his flute-

playing, and he is seen staring at the flying “ kites”, attracted by their unrestricted movements.

While his brother asks him to capture a “ kite” for him, he tells his brother that “ kites’ cannot be held captive as they are forever free. Tarapada himself is like a “ kite”, he too cannot be held a captive in the prisons of emotional and affectionate bondings.

He too is forever free, distant to the ideas of bonds and ties. In a scene, he is seen talking to his future tutor Ramratan Babu, who was then fishing in a pond. As they were talking, the “ fish” escapes from the rod. Sinha consciously used the “ fish” imagery to suggest the escapist nature of fishes.

ROY 5 Tarapada like fishes does not get much involved with anything or anyone; fishes swim on the upper stratum of streams as Tarapada has onlt temporary and outward attachment with his acquaintances.

He like the fish on Ramratan Babu’s rod also escapes, after spending two years with Motilal Babu and taking tuitions from Ramratan babu. An intelligent student like Tarapada was fished out by Ramratan Babu, but Tarapada being a restless fish escapes soon. In one scene, we see Tarapada freeing a horse by untying the knot around its feet.

Himself being a free man and always longing for freedom, he could not bear the sight of the animal in captivity. However, later attracted by the sounds of the hooves of a running horse and its bells, he leaves Motilal Babu’s house on the night before his marriage. Sinha hows a few stuffed animals on display in one scene at Motilal Babu’s house.

The images of the stuffed animals are used in order to emphasise their loss of vitality, freedom and desire. Tarapada fears the loss and does not want to lead his life like a stuffed animal who will not be allowed to pursue his desires.

With the introduction of Sonamoni (played by Mita Mukhopadhyay), Sinha re-orientates the triangular relationship between Tarapada, Charushoshi (played by Bashobi Bandopadhyay) and the latter's friend, the child-widow Sonamoni. Tagore's Charu is initially jealous of her parents' weakness for Tarapada, but she at the same time cannot bear his brotherly affection for Sonamoni. Sinha's Charu, upon learning about Tarapada's acquaintance with Sonamoni, falsely accuses the latter of stealing her toys. Tarapada has been turned into Charu's "toy" to be played and controlled at will.

Later Charu is seen to be breaking Tarapada's flute while she had seen Sonamoni dancing lightly to Tarapada's tunes. Gradually, the adolescent Charu and Tarapada ROY 6 soften towards each other and they are seen regarding each other with silent eyes, revealing their sub-conscious mutual attraction. However Tarapada is not yet ready to settle down in marriage and leaves before their marriage is held. Sinha has carefully selected Tagore's songs and has composed music to musically express Tarapada's yearning for liberation.

The tune of Tagore's song "Ri Akashe Amar Mukti Aloy Alo" ("My Deliverance is in the Lighted Firmament"[Sil]) is played on flute several times in the film- while Tarapada is watching "kites" and following a yatra-troupe.

It is played on violin when he seeks a break from his routine studies in the garden, evoking a melancholy mood. In one scene, tarapada is seen to be singing Tagore's " Dhara diyechi go Ami akasnero Pakhi" (I, a bird of the Sky, have surrendered"[Anirban Ray]) before Motilal Babu, in order to indicate his unfelt romantic bond and entrapment with Charushoshi.

Tarapada's yearning for freedom is the desire of every human being bound by individual responsibilities. Sinha too in his Atithi has sought his own directorial freedom, according to his own reading and aesthetic viewpoints, which have rendered a tag of successful autonomous work on his Atithi. While reading literary texts we " absorb" verbal, mental image, our senses are " engaged" in perception of audio-visual images while watching films; the filmic sights and sounds are conveyed through our " ' neural structures and visuo-motor schemata' " as maintained in cognitive theory (Stam 6).