

Rabindranath Tagore's *Nauka Dubi* – From Page to Screen”

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A journey of a literary work from page to screen makes adaptation interesting. The adaptation of print medium into film took place for certain reasons. Firstly, the director gets fascinated by the story and believes the story lends itself beautifully to the medium of film. Secondly, many a time he wishes to present his personal interpretation of the original story through his own language of film. Thirdly, he wishes to take up the challenge of recreating a period in history, and the original literary source is picked up mainly for the period element than for its theme of plot. Fourthly, he would like to use film because the story as literature reflects it, is in some way or another his own ideological stand on a particular subject or issue, and his use of the film medium conveys this ideology to his audience.

Rabindranath Tagore is a milestone in Bengali literature. With the publication of *Gitanjali*, his fame attained a luminous height taking him across continents. For the world he became the voice of India's spiritual heritage; and for India, especially for Bengal he became a great living institution. Tagore was philosophic, spiritual and experimental in his expression. He was more inclined to poetry but contributed and enriched all most all forms of art and literature. There is no exaggeration if we call him the best literary stalwart of India. His famous work e.g. 'Gora', 'Chokher-Bali', 'Nauka Dubi', 'Char Adhyay' fall into the category of the best Bengali novels, extremely popular and reached the masses through the original and translated versions of his works.

Tagore, a towering personality in the world of literature, has been a source of inspiration for adaptation. Many adaptations of his works are in his native Bengali, Hindi and in many other regional languages e.g. Kumar Sahani's directorial venture in interpreting Rabindranath Tagore's 1933 novel 'Char Adhyay', Satyjit Ray's *Charulata* is based on Tagore's novelette 'Nastaneer' and 'Chokher Bali' starring Aishwariya Rai is also

a reflection of Tagore's work with the same name. In this paper I wish to study different regional adaptation based on Tagore's *Nauka Dubi*.

The first adaptation is Hindi movie '*Ghunghat*' by Ramanand Sagar, a well known name to the viewer of Hindi cinema. Ramanand Sagar, a master of adaptation, contributed to Hindi cinema and television. His successful Hindi blockbuster movies *Aankhen* (1968), *Romance* (1983), *Baghvat* (1982), *Prem Bandhan* (1979), *Charas* (1976) acclaimed box office success. His teleserials like '*Ramayan*' (1987), *Krishna* (1994), *Vikram aur Betal* (1988) and *Luv Kush* (1988) are successful adaptations of Indian epics. He won Filmfare awards for Best director and Best Dialogue Writer for the films '*Aankhen*' and '*Paigham*'.

Ramanand Sagar as a producer and director cast Bharat Bhushan Pradeep Kumar, Asha Parekh, Beena Rai and Rehman in the film '*Ghunghat*' (1960)

Arun Bhatt, is a son of Vijay Bhatt well known director of Hindi cinema. Unlike his father, he contributed to Gujarati cinema as a director of many successful Gujarati movies. In 1982, his film '*Ghar Ghar ni vaat*' collected Gujarat state Government's award, in 1983 '*Pooja na Fool*' received 1st prize for the film and 2nd prize for director Bhatt was honored as the best director for the film '*Sona ni Jaal*' and '*Shetal Tara Unda Pani*' in 1985. Arun Bhatt's '*Parki Thapan*' by Bharat film is super block buster Gujarati film star casting superstars like Snehlata, Rajiv, Ragini, Arvind Pandya, Deepak Gheewala, Ramesh Mehta and Asrani is an adaptation of Tagore's '*Nauka Dubi*'.

For Bengali film viewer's Rutuparno Ghosh is a well known name for giving slow offbeat movies. He though involved more with Bengali cinema is not an unknown name to Hindi Film audience. Rutuparno Ghosh was adjudged the 'the Big director of decade' by public in the 'Big Bangla movie awards 2010. The films like '*Raincoat*', '*Dosar*', '*Sunglass*', '*The Last Layer*' are the precious possessions of Rutuparno Ghosh. The film *Kashmkash* by Ghai (dubbed from the Bengali film '*Nauka Dubi*') star casted Jishu Sengupta, Raima Sen, Riya Sen, Prosenjit Chatterjee.

'*Nauka Dubi*' stands apart from the rest of Rabindranath Tagore's oeuvre in more ways than one. Unlike some of his other works it's neither philosophically burdened nor does it raise social issues. The reader gets fascinated by the flawless current and rapid action of the story. The emotional and social whirlpool of the characters create variety, making the story strong and compact. The subject described is serious and deeply related to life, and so effortlessly attracts enthusiast reader, creating curiosity for the fast moving story. The dilemma of the character is expressed easily through the story. Unlike '*Chaurang*' and '*Ghar Bahir*' philosophic burden is absent in '*Nauka Dubi*' but even then internal mysteries of characters are expressed well.

A short summary of the novel at this point will help us understand comparison better. '*Nauka Dubi*' is a novel of unusual incidents taking place in the beginning of the novel, followed by its after effects and struggle of the characters to get free from this unwanted situation.

Ramesh, the protagonist of the novel, reminds us of Shakespeare's tragic hero Macbeth but unlike him Ramesh is not a tragic hero. Nevertheless, he invites numerous complex situations because of his indecisiveness. The brilliant law student is deeply in love with Hemnalini, who has all the qualities of a perfect counterpart for him. Unfortunately, his idealistic quality causes him to unwillingly accept his father's decision of marrying an illiterate village girl, Susheela. After his marriage, during the return journey, the bridal party faces a ship wreck. Ramesh saves Kamala believing her to be Susheela, who was the bride of Dr. Nalinaksha. This is the major incident in the novel. Marriage is a common incident in the life of ordinary people but it becomes uncommon and stressful for him when the situation forces him to be with someone else's wife.

In the story the only focus is to get Kamala and Nalinaksha together. Tagore created Nalinaksha and Ramesh as idealistic and noble human beings. In the beginning only Ramesh carries the pressure of this contrasting situation but slowly and gradually the story drags Kamala into this traumatic situation.

Akshaybabu, a companion of Hemnalini's brother Yogendra, is a strong competitor to Ramesh. His deep desire for the marriage leads him to find out why Ramesh postponed his marriage with Hemnalini. Ramesh escapes from Calcutta just a few days before his marriage.

After this escape from Calcutta, they start an aimless journey towards the west but on the way they happen to meet Chakrovarti Babu. He persuades Ramesh to settle and practice in Gajipur. In his house Shailja and Vipin, a young couple, provide a contrast to the dry married life of Kamala and Ramesh. While cleaning and dusting her house, Kamala unfortunately finds a letter written to Hemnalini by Ramesh explaining all the conditions and reasons for postponing their marriage. The first reaction of Kamala is to commit suicide but she becomes strong and tries to search for her husband Dr. Nalinbabu. Everyone independently searches for Kamala's husband but Dr. Nalinbabu is unaware about this tangle, and is getting ready for the marriage with Hemnalini. On the other hand, Kamla struggles hard in the house of Dr. Nalinaksh as a housemaid with a new name Haridasini. Ramesh re enters the scene creating a storm and shatters all the planning and arrangement of the wedding between Dr. Nalinbabu and Hemnalini. To prove his innocence, he clarifies his behavior, marital relation and attitude towards Kamla. This sudden appearance of Ramesh disturbs them. This disturbance of Hemnalini is misinterpreted as reluctance by Kshemkari who then inclines towards Kamla.

Tagore ends the novel, with the reunion of Kamla and Dr. Nalinaksha, and the unexpected, abrupt parting of Hemnalini and Ramesh. Dr Nalinbabu accepts her and expects his mother will forgive Kamla.

Tagore, with the help of four major characters Hemnalini, Ramesh, Kamla and Dr. Nalinaksha, created a strong plot supported by a few minor characters like Akshay, Yogendra, Anandababu, Umesh, Chakrovartibhabu, Shailja, Vipin and Kshemkari. He creates a complex music of emotions interwoven with rapid events. External, uncontrolled events and complex emotions are at the root of this confusion, otherwise, no one is an actual villain in the story. Perfect shape and depth is given

to each character. Tagore's treatment of the subject exhibits his extraordinary imagination and deep knowledge of human nature.

The difference and similarity between the novel and the films can be broadly classified under three areas:

- Character and their relations
- Plot-subplot with different scenes and situations
- The end of the stories.

In the Gujarati film '*Parki Thapan*,' director Arun Bhatt introduces the main group of characters and their relations as shown in the novel but with Gujarati names. He creates Gujarati culture in the film to appeal to the Gujarati audience. The Gujarati film heroine Ragini is Hemnalini, named Nisha in the film. Nisha is in love with Ajay, a law student like Ramesh, in the novel. Here, the mother emotionally exploits her son and compels him to marry a village girl. The other two main characters are Dr. Manoj and Usha, playing the role of Dr. Nalinaksha and Kamala. In the novel, dowry is the reason for the marriage of Dr. Nalinaksha and Kamala. In the film, Usha is an adopted child, brought up in the Rajputana family, and Dr. Manoj who comes to attend her marriage, saves the family from social disgrace by marrying Usha.

From the group of the minor characters, we have only Principal Madhavrai in the role of the father as a constant companion to Nisha. Like the novel, here also we have a group of three characters. They are Ajay's friends – Lalit, his wife Chandrakala, and Lalit's father in the role of Chakrovartibabu. In the novel, Chakrovartibabu is a fatherly figure to Kamala, while this old father of Ajay's friend becomes a guiding source for Ajay in the film. The director has excluded the role of the brother and cut short the character of Akshay. Suraj, playing role of Akshaybabu, appears only once or twice in the film. The director Arun Bhatt has convincingly used a train crash as the main incident instead of the ship wreck.

In the Hindi film, '*Ghunghat*' director Ramanand Sagar introduced four major characters: Asha Parekh as Laxmi, in the role of Hemnalini and Pradeep Kumar as Ravi in the role of Ramesh. In the other pair, we have Bharat Bhushan in the role of Dr. Gopal and Beena Rai in the role of Parvati. The director has used dowry as a social problem, like the novel. Instead of Kamala's maternal uncle we have her brother Manohar, a friend of Gopal who saves him from social disgrace by marrying his sister Parvati. All these actions take place in the Northern part of India (Delhi, Allahabad and Massuri) where it is unconvincing for the viewer to think about a ship wreck.

In the group of minor characters we have the mother as a constant companion to Lakshmi and Ravi's uncle. His cousin Saroj and her husband are the supporting actors in the film. They provide comic relief to the serious story and this couple is used perfectly in contrast to Ravi and Parvati.

The film *Kashmakash* by Rituparno Ghosh is a period film set in the 1920's. Except for a few changes, the director has maintained the characters, milieu, action and plot intact as in the novel. We see a literal translation of Tagore's novel into the film. We have Jishu Sengupta in role of Ramesh, Raima Sen as Hemnalini, Riya Sen as Kamala and Prosenjit Chatterjee in the role of Dr. Nalinaksha. The director has used Gulzar's lyrics as a means to propel the story, and for portraying the inner psyche and emotional complexity of the character.

The end of all the three films are notable partly because they differ so substantially from the end of the novel where only Kamala and Dr. Nalinaksha are happily reunited while Tagore had an abrupt and shocking end. But all the films end with a happy reunion of the couples – Kamla and Dr. Nalinaksha, and Ramesh and Hemnalini.

All the three directors are successful in their adaptations. With minor changes, Ramanand Sagar and Arun Bhatt could create super blockbuster films while Rituparno Ghosh was successful in recreating the 1920's for the audience.

It would be appropriate to conclude by quoting Joy Gould Boyum :

“In assessing an adaptation; we are never really comparing book with film but an interpretation with an interpretation-the novel that we ourselves have recreated in our imaginations, out of which we have constructed our own individualized ‘movie’ and the novel on which the filmmaker has worked a parallel transformation. For just as we are readers, so implicitly is the filmmaker, offering us through his work his perceptions his visions, his particular insight into his source. An adaptation is always whatever else it may be, an interpretation.”

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