Cinematic Décor and Character Reconfiguration in Literature-film Adaptation: A Study of Satyajit Ray's *The Postmaster*, *Mahanagar*, and *Ganashatru*

Ph.D. Thesis

By

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I hereby certify that the work which is being presented in the thesis entitled **CINEMATIC DÉCOR AND CHARACTER RECONFIGURATION IN LITERATURE-FILM ADAPTATION: A STUDY OF SATYAJIT RAY'S *THE POSTMASTER*, *MAHANAGAR*, AND *GANASHATRU*** in the partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY** and submitted in the **SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES, Indian Institute of Technology Indore**, is an authentic record of my own work carried out during the time period from January, 2020 to February, 2025 under the supervision of Dr. Ananya Ghoshal, Assistant Professor, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Indore.

The matter presented in this thesis has not been submitted by me for the award of any other degree of this or any other institute.

Shyam Sundar Pal 18/06/2025

Signature of the student with date
SHYAM SUNDAR PAL

This is to certify that the above statement made by the candidate is correct to the best of my/our knowledge.

Ananya Ghoshal 18.06.2025

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Shyam Sundar Pal has successfully given his/her Ph.D. Oral Examination held on **13.06.2025**.

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Signature of Thesis Supervisor with date
Dr. ANANYA GHOSHAL

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THESIS SYNOPSIS

Introduction

Satyajit Ray (1921-1992) is one of India's greatest international filmmakers of the twentieth century. His debut film *Pather Panchali* (*Song of the Little Road,* 1955) ushered in a colossal shift in India's otherwise conventionalist style of filmmaking. Ray enjoyed a prolific career spanning nearly four decades, directing several feature films, documentaries, and short films. His works explore a wide gamut of themes, ranging from the depiction of rural life in colonial Bengal in *Pather Panchali* and *Ashani Sanket* (*Distant Thunder*, 1973) to the small-town politics of the fictional Chandipur in *Ganashatru* (*Enemy of the People*, 1989). Ray also portrayed the urban landscape of 1970s Calcutta in films such as *Pratidwandi* (*The Adversary*, 1970) and *Jana Aranya* (*The Middleman*, 1975). Some of his films also serve as political satires, such as *Hirak Rajar Deshe* (*Kingdom of Diamonds*, 1980), set in the imaginary country of the Diamond King.

Satyajit Ray's films are critically discussed and researched across the globe. They are celebrated as 'human documents' exploring rural and urban Bengal and, in unison, hailed as timeless classics with a universal appeal. As a prevalent method of adapting literary sources into films in Bengali cinema during Ray's time, he also adapted many literary texts into films. Among the twenty-nine feature films, Ray has borrowed literary texts for adaptation on twenty-six occasions. The greater the variety of themes Ray selected from his source texts, the more diverse genres he could incorporate into his filmography. Consequently, adaptation emerged as a fundamental aspect of his filmmaking career. However, this aspect has either been overlooked or only superficially addressed. The present study aims to address this lacuna by exploring Ray's distinct methodological approaches in film adaptation. It also seeks to investigate Ray's adaptation strategies over the course of his career.

Based on Ray's writings and interviews on film adaptation, this study identifies that Ray utilizes the extensive possibilities of cinematic décor and character reconfiguration as methodological strategies to interpret literary texts onto the screen. To examine these consistent methodological approaches of Ray's film adaptation, three films are selected for close analysis: *The Postmaster* (1961), *Mahanagar* (1963), and *Ganashatru* (1989). Each film represents a definite phase in Ray's filmmaking career characterized by unique and contrastive visual styles, settings, and themes rooted in their literary sources. This study reappraises Ray's ability to engage with literary source texts while developing a distinctive cinematic language that resonates with contemporary audiences.

Literature Review

Ray on Cinema

The earliest literature on Satyajit Ray scholarship dates back to the 1950s. The release of *Pather Panchali* (1955) and its immediate worldwide recognition attracted the attention of film critics and academics alike. The initial responses of the critics and scholars were primarily reflected in magazine articles, film journal pages, daily newspapers, and other short pieces. During this period, Ray also shared his insights on Indian cinema and the arts and crafts of filmmaking, contributing to many newspaper articles and magazines. These writings were later collected into three volumes: *Our Films, Their Films* (1976), *Speaking of Films* (2005), and *Deep Focus: Reflections on Cinema* (2011). In 2013, *Deep Focus* was reprinted as *Satyajit Ray on Cinema* with a foreword by Shyam Benegal. Critical essays across these collections are crucial in leading the contemporary analysis of Ray's work. For example, in "What Is Wrong with Indian Films?" Ray points out the brazen technical flaws in Indian cinema and ruminates on adapting a literary text onto the screen. Meanwhile, "Some Aspects of My Craft" familiarizes the reader with Ray's

crafts, reflecting on the art of designing or décor in his films. Similarly, "On Charulata," in *Speaking of Films* (2005), a response piece to Mr. Ashok Rudra's criticism of Ray's adaptation of Tagore in the October issue (1964) of the Bengali magazine *Parichay*, tends to highlight the "difficulties of making a film from a piece of literature" (143).

Biographies and anthologies

Marie Seton's *Portrait of a Director: Satyajit Ray* (1971/2003) can be considered the earliest attempt in any language to sketch out a biographical account of Ray. Seton traced Ray's extensive ancestral lineage, highlighting the family's distinguished reputation and remarkable contributions to Bengali art and culture. The chapters on *The Postmaster* and *Mahanagar* are informative and relevant in the context of this study. The revised edition of Seton's book, released in 2003 with a foreword by Sandip Ray, Satyajit Ray's son and a filmmaker, includes two previously unpublished writings by Seton. In one of these pieces, "Directing—Interiors in Studios," Seton shares her observations of Ray's directing methods during the on-set studio shoot. Following Marie Seton, Andrew Robinson's *Satyajit Ray, The Inner Eye: The Biography of a Master Filmmaker* (1989/2004) represents a second attempt to chronicle a biography revisiting Ray's long family lineage and his entry into filmmaking through his role as an artist in an advertising firm. Revised in two editions, Robinson's book studies Ray's films as "a body of work of incredible range – of period, setting, social class, tone and genre" (viii). He further believes that "no other filmmaker, apart maybe from Kurosawa (though his depiction of women is notably inferior to Ray's), has encompassed a whole culture… covered such a range, from pure farce to high tragedy and from musical fantasies to detective stories" (viii). Robinson's essays also reveal how Ray's films capture the subtle nuances of the Bengali culture.

The contribution of Chidananda Das Gupta, one of the earliest critics of Ray's cinema, is also immense. His edited book *Satyajit Ray: An Anthology*

of Statements on Ray and by Ray (1981) is possibly the earliest anthological collection of critical essays on Ray's films. The book also features a lengthy interview with Ray, during which the filmmaker shares insights into his creative process. He elaborates on his filmmaking techniques, discusses the role of music in his projects, and provides commentaries on his scripts and the art of acting. An extended version of this book, *The Cinema of Satyajit Ray* (1994), is likely the first comprehensive anthological study of Ray's entire body of work. In his study, Das Gupta attempts to reorganize the films to create a chronological sequence that reveals an awareness of the evolving Indian social order (3).

Ben Nyce's *Satyajit Ray: A Study of His Films* (1988) is another anthological attempt to study Ray's films comprehensively, from *Pather Panchali* (1955) to *Ghare Baire* (1984). Nyce's book applauds the auteur aspects of Ray as a filmmaker, alluding to his polymath temperament and the urge to handle the many faculties of filmmaking on a limited budget allocation (2). His chronological study of Ray's films celebrates the diversity of the subject matter and mode of expression in the succeeding films rather than repeating past successes (2).

Soon after the demise of Ray, *My Years with Apu* (1994) was released as a posthumous collection, with the final edit and revision carried out by Ray's wife, Bijaya Ray. The book offers the minute details and significant moments of Ray's life, leading to the making of *Pather Panchali*.

On Ray's themes

Surabhi Banerjee's *Satyajit Ray: Beyond the Frame* (1996), Darius Cooper's *The Cinema of Satyajit Ray: Between Tradition and Modernity* (2000), Suranjan Ganguly's *Satyajit Ray: In Search of the Modern* (2007) were all written during the mid to late 1990s to explore how Ray ushered modernity into tradition-bound Indian cinema (Ganguly 1). Surabhi Banerjee's book seeks to explore the multifaceted talents of the artist

Satyajit Ray, going beyond the widely recognized persona of a great filmmaker. She infers that "the woof of Ray's creative ethos may best be described as a polyphonic" (5). Ganguly also endeavored to break the conventional labeling of Ray as a Renaissance humanist, classicist, etc. Instead, Ganguly emphasized Ray's upbringing and cultural inheritance, which made him a product of a unique East-West fusion involving a larger struggle to define India, where he functioned as an artist (1-2).

Reena Dube's *The Chess Players and Postcolonial Theory: Culture, Labour and the Value of Alterity* (2005) is a postcolonial attempt to study Ray based on his film *Shatranj Ke Khilari* (*The Chess Players*, 1977). Keya Ganguly's *Cinema, Emergence, and the Films of Satyajit Ray* (2010) further investigates Ray's response to modernism and *avant-gardism,* analyzing six of Ray's selected films. John W. Hood's *Beyond the World of Apu: The Films of Satyajit Ray* (2008) is another compendium of Ray's entire oeuvre, in which the films are grouped under thematic concerns, sidestepping the limitation of chronology. Mainak Biswas' edited collection *Apu and After: Revisiting Ray's Cinema* (2006) features a series of essays that examine Ray's perspectives on modernism, nationhood, and contemporary urban life, as well as his interpretation of literature on screen.

Bengali writings on Ray

Besides this host of literature in English over the decades, there is also a considerably vast trajectory of Bengali writing on Ray. The most pertinent among them have been reviewed for the purpose of this study. Subrata Rudra's edited collection, *Satyajit: Jibon ar Sahitya* (1996), is a compilation of various essays and reflections on Satyajit Ray. Contributions from Ray's actors, crew members, film critics, and academics on various aspects of Ray as an artist enhance the richness of the collection, making it an essential reference for this study. *Satyajit-Pratibha* (1993), edited by Bijit Ghosh, is also an excellent compilation of essays on Ray contributed by prominent

Ray enthusiasts. Sankarlal Bhattacharya's *Satyajitke Niye* (2005) reflects on the writer, filmmaker, and graphic designer Satyajit Ray.

Ujjal Chakraborty, filmmaker, artist, writer, and a long-term collaborator of Ray, published his collection of essays, *Satyajit Bhabana*, in 2010. These essays cover a wide range of topics, from Ray's approach towards adaptation, the Feluda stories, the music of the contemporary city, and Ray's contribution to children's literature. His collaborations with Anirudha Dhar and Atanu Chakraborty resulted in an expansive study of Ray's cinema, *Panchali Theke Oscar*— Vol. 1 & 2 (2010). Sunit Sengupta's *Satyajit Ray* (2016) is also significant since it is one of the few fuller biographical accounts of Satyajit Ray in Bengali.

Following this review of extensive literature, the study surmises that an aspect of Ray's cinema that has largely been overlooked or only superficially examined is his methodological strategies for adapting literary texts into films. Of late, a sparse number of studies have explored Ray's art of adaptation. However, these studies primarily compare the source text and the adaptation based on thematic differences and cultural contexts. This approach often neglects a deeper analysis of the underlying structures present in the literary work and its film adaptation.

M. Asaduddin and Anuradha Ghosh's edited collection *Filming Fiction: Tagore, Premchand, and Ray* (2012) includes several critical essays that examine Ray's adaptation of Rabindranath Tagore and Munshi Premchand. However, the term 'adaptation' has not been used in the book's title or even most essay titles, barring one or two. The essays primarily concern *Charulata* (1964) and *Ghare Baire* (1984), focusing on inter-semiotic translation between the medium, the transcreation process, and the feminist interpretation of Ray's recreation of Tagore. Tamal Dasgupta's *Understanding the Screenplays of Satyajit Ray: The Art of Adaptation* (2015) is an attempt to scrutinize the adaptation process from text to screen. Although it refers to Ray's addition of pictorial details and music to the

screenplay, this book primarily focuses on the comparative analysis of the source text and its adaptation. Sharif Mahmud's *Satyajit Ray: Indian Master of Adaptation in Films* (2017) analyses three of Ray's most well-known films, *Pather Panchali*, *Charulata,* and *Ghare Baire*, and aims to uncover the comparative differences and gradual changes in Ray's adaptations. More recently, Hirendrakumar Patel's dissertation "Adaptation from Literature to Cinema: An Analysis of Satyajit Ray's Selected Movies" (2021) has examined The Apu Trilogy films and adaptations of Premchand's stories, including summaries of the original texts and providing detailed plot analysis of the films.

While these studies have sought to tackle the long-overdue questions surrounding Ray's methodological adaptation process, their heavy reliance on comparative analysis and the pursuit of differences in the texts raises concerns about the ongoing issue of fidelity studies in adaptation. Consequently, these studies highlight a persistent research gap in Ray's approach to adaptation that must be addressed. What significant and unique adaptation strategies were employed by Satyajit Ray throughout his filmmaking career? How can we recognize these very strategies in film adaptations? What criteria should be used to select films that demonstrate the consistent and familiar elements Ray incorporates when interpreting literary texts for the screen? Furthermore, what roles do these strategies play in interpreting literary works, and how do they contribute to the film's narrative?

Objectives

After conducting a comprehensive review of the literature and identifying the research gap, this study aims to accomplish the following objectives:

- It seeks to establish how the elements of cinematic décor and character reconfiguration serve as methodological tools in Ray's film adaptation process.
- It explores whether these methodological approaches can be identified as consistent and dynamic in analyzing the three films selected from different phases of his career, which feature contrasting visual materials and themes.
- Ray's conception of cinematic décor, including set design, draws on his comprehensive drawings and sketches created during the phase of screenplay writing. Hence, this study seeks to posit the analysis within the framework of rematerializing adaptation theory to understand how it adds literal and rhetorical meaning to the film narrative in the critical interpretation of the literary source.
- It examines Ray's approach to character reconfiguration in adaptation and how Ray's reconfigured/embodied characters on the screen are materialized through the director's specific vision. When analyzed on the basis of the embodied theory of adaptation, they evolve to create a more affirmative and optimistic emotional resonance with the spectator, either absent or unintended in the original literary works.

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

The primary methodology of this study is gleaned from Ray's own views regarding film adaptation, as evident in the edited collections *Our Films, Their Films* (1976)*, Speaking of Films* (2005), and *Satyajit Ray on Cinema* (2013). The chapters "Notes on Filming Bibhuti Bhusan" and "Should a Filmmaker Be Original?" in *Satyajit Ray on Cinema* are examined to highlight two key elements in Ray's approach to adapting literary texts into the film that hold the utmost significance. Ray refers to these elements as 'the cinematic possibilities of the contrast'—the element of visual contrasts

on the screen and the dramatic contrast internalized by the characters (12). Developing on this statement by Ray, this study builds on the concept of cinematic décor, including set décor and character reconfiguration as methodological strategies of Ray's adaptation process.

The concept of visual contrast also informs the selection of the three films being discussed: *The Postmaster* (1961), *Mahanagar* (1963), and *Ganashatru* (1989). These films, representing three distinct phases of Ray's filmmaking career, are chosen for their settings and visual elements, presented chronologically in the order of their release. The visual material on the screen is studied chiefly by analyzing the set décor or design in those settings and is often augmented by other visual material on the screen. Simultaneously, these three films, spanning nearly three decades, explore Ray's fascination with various subjective themes, including colonial history, modern urban life, and an ethical assessment of corruption. The characters find themselves in various settings confronting social issues or inner conflicts, often derived from the source texts. Ray reconfigures these characters, deviating frequently and willingly from the intentions of the literary authors. To trace the study of set décor in film criticism and to understand the cinematic function of set décor, this study refers to the theoretical works of Charles Affron and Mirella Jona Affron (*Sets in Motion Art Direction and Film Narrative*, 1995), Giuliana Bruno (*Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture, and Film*, 2002), and Tim Bergfelder, Sue Harris, and Sarah Street (*Film Architecture and the Transnational Imagination*, 2007). Additionally, the thesis investigates how Ray's extensive drawing and sketching during the process of screenplay writing enriches the set design and its significant connection to the film's narrative.

This work in adaptation studies is grounded in rematerializing adaptation theory, significantly developed and revised by Kyle Meikle, to understand the rhetorical and literal role of visual elements, including set décor, in transforming narratives. Furthermore, drawing on David Evan Richard's

embodied adaptation theory, it investigates how reconfigured characters reflecting the director's vision develop on screen, demonstrating different emotional appeals diverging the imagined conceptions in the literary texts.

The Structure of the Thesis and the Findings of the Study

Introduction

The introduction discusses the diversity of Ray's adapted films and reveals the purpose of the study. It summarises the trajectory of Ray's scholarship over the decades, including the literature covering the adaptations he filmed. The literature review addresses the research gap and the primary objectives of this research. The introduction also provides a detailed background of the theoretical framework of adaptation studies. Analyzing Ray's perspective on filmmaking and adaptation foregrounds why these films were selected. In summary, the introduction provides a roadmap for the study by detailing the scheme of chapters.

Chapter 1: Rematerializing Adaptation through Cinematic Décor and Character Reconfiguration: Introducing Ray's Approach

Chapter one defines cinematic set décor and provides an overview of the trajectory of set décor studies in film criticism. It investigates the impact of Ray's sketches during the screenplay writing phase on the set decoration for his films. The chapter argues that Ray's inclination towards drawing and sketching during the process of screenplay development is a direct result of his earlier training as an artist in Kala Bhavana at Shantiniketan and, later, his long-time affiliation at the advertising and illustration job at DJ Keymer and Signet Press before he ventured into filmmaking. The chapter further reveals Ray's process of character reconfiguration in adaptation, citing examples from his oeuvre. It situates Ray's methodological approach to cinematic décor in the rematerializing adaptation theory by Kyle Meikle. Additionally, it demonstrates that the fascinating process of transforming characters from literature to film can reflect how the embodied characters

on screen materially appeal to the spectator, as articulated in David Evan Richard's embodied theory of adaptation.

Chapter 2: Materializing Rural Décor and Resilient Characters: Adapting Tagore in *The Postmaster* (1961)

The first part of chapter two explores the rural setting of Ray's film *The Postmaster* (1961), adapted from Tagore's eponymous short story. It showcases the creation of the gloomy mise-en-scène on screen that metaphorically depicts the challenges of rural life, specifically designed for the newcomer postmaster in Ulapur. The chapter studies how the set décor, which has a plain architectural design, is layered with rhetorical implications that critique the apparent social distinction between the two primary characters.

The second part of the chapter examines the gradual reconfiguration of characters in the film, revealing imaginative departures from Tagore's text. The introduction of a madman character introduces a new dimension to Ray's narrative, hinting at an anti-colonial atmosphere. This section references three of Ray's short stories, where central characters embody anti-colonial resistance, contributing to a deeper understanding of the film *The Postmaster.* The chapter explores how the materiality of the madman—dressed in bizarre clothes, with an intimidating appearance, a loud scream, and a protest against the postmaster—manifests as an anti-colonial response on screen. Similarly, unlike Tagore's story, Ratan, in Ray's film, in congruence with the madman, embodies the materiality of resistance on the screen by refusing to offer the postmaster an empathetic departure from Ulapur.

Chapter 3: The Materiality of Contrasting City Décor and Embodying Optimistic Characters on the Screen: *Mahanagar* from Mitra to Ray

Chapter three discusses the film *Mahanagar* (*The Big City*, 1963), adapted from the Bengali short story 'Abataranika' ('The Prologue,' 1949) by Narendranath Mitra. Mitra's story is set in the aftermath of the partition of Bengal following the Indian independence in 1947, in which a family migrates from East Bengal (now Bangladesh) to Calcutta. Mitra's text guides Ray in exploring the dynamic features of city décor for the first time in his filmmaking career. The first part of the chapter captures the minute details of the set décor designed for the impoverished middle-class family of Aroti and Subroto. It further explores how the set décor for Aroti's house sits in contrast with the visual elaboration of the rest of the city décor. The contrast in city décor metaphorically weaves in the film narrative.

The second part of the chapter focuses on Ray's reconfiguration of the three primary characters from Mitra's text- Aroti, Subroto, and Priyagopal. It argues how Ray's deep belief in family bonding drives the characters to express a tangible sense of optimism through their actions, a perspective not provided by Mitra's text. Apart from the affirmative reconfiguration of Priyagopal's character, the chapter illustrates how Ray conveys to Aroti and Subroto his belief that human relationships are a source of strength and optimism. The couple's renewed bond at the film's conclusion redefines their tangible transformation, illustrating a shift in emotions from despair to optimism as depicted on screen.

Chapter 4: Materializing the Dynamics of Interior Décor and the Embodiment of Resilient Characters and Human Unity: Transcultural Adaptation of Ibsen in *Ganashatru*

Drawing from Linda Hutcheon's theory of adaptation, this chapter identifies Ray's adaptation of Henrik Ibsen's play *An Enemy of the People* (1882) into *Ganashatru* as an instance of transcultural adaptation. The chapter delineates the process of transculturation in Ray's film by explaining how Ray appropriated a 19th-century European small town to an imaginary small town in Bengal, Chandipur, in the late 1980s. The first part of the

chapter unravels Ray's preoccupation with dynamic interior décor to unveil a new style of filmmaking at the swansong stage of his career. Applying André Bazin's defense of filmed theatre, the chapter establishes that Ray's innovative set up of interior décor compliments an attempt to make *Ganashatru* into a filmed theatre.

The second part of this chapter studies Ray's character reconfiguration process in the transcultural adaptation constitutive of the mythical and symbolic references to naming the characters and places. The chapter concludes by foregrounding the materiality of Dr. Gupta's resilience, which evolves through the vicissitudes of varying emotions and finds its momentary success in celebrating human unity, unlike Ibsen's Dr. Stockmann.

Chapter 5 (Postscript): Interviews with Mr. Sandip Ray and Mr. Ujjal Chakraborty

This chapter, divided into two parts, features interviews with Mr. Sandip Ray, the filmmaker son of Satyajit Ray, and Mr. Ujjal Chakraborty, a long-time collaborator of Ray and a film critic, teacher, and writer. They discuss Ray's cinema with special attention to set décor and character reconfiguration for the three films under discussion. These interviews were conducted during the fieldwork phase of the research in Kolkata.

Conclusion

The conclusion summarizes and reflects upon the analysis carried out in the main chapters of the thesis. It establishes how the materiality of cinematic décor critically interprets literary text in Ray's films. Ray's approach to character reconfiguration in adaptation involves materializing reconfigured or embodied characters on screen through his specific vision. This process allows for a deeper exploration of character nuances and motivations that may differ from the source material, i.e., the literary texts Ray adapted from. When analyzed through embodied adaptation theory, Ray's reconfigured

characters contribute to the film's narrative by actively engaging the audience's emotions. As a result, Ray's adaptations often create a more affirmative and optimistic emotional resonance, which may either be absent or unintended in the original literary works. This transformation enhances the overall impact of the films and encourages viewers to engage with the characters on a deeper level. The conclusion outlines the contributions of the project and suggests potential directions for future research.

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Table of Contents

LIST OF FIGURES

Introduction

> I, as the interpreter through the film medium, exercised my right to select, modify, and arrange. This is a right which every filmmaker, who aspires to more than doing a commercial chore – to artistic endeavor, in fact – possesses.
>
> Satyajit Ray[1]

Satyajit Ray (1921-1992), one of India's greatest globally renowned filmmakers of the 20th century, was intrigued by the medium of cinema in the very formative years of his life. His close affinity with the medium of cinema gradually culminated in nearly four decades of his filmmaking career, starting with the iconic *Pather Panchali* (*Song of the Little Road*, 1955) and making as many as twenty-nine feature films and a few documentaries and short films. Therefore, the authenticity of Ray's perspective of filmmaking and the art of adaptation springs from his long-term affinity with the medium of film. According to Ray, "he became a film fan while still at school. He avidly read *Picturegoer* and *Photoplay*, neglected his studies, and gorged himself on Hollywood gossip purveyed by Hedda Hopper and Louella Parsons" (*My Years with Apu* 4).

When Ray was promoted to college from school in academic persuasion, his interest in cinema grew stronger and shifted from the stars to the directors, which was probably triggered by a reading of the two books on film theory by Pudovkin. Gradually, he became engrossed in the cinematic world of John Ford, Frank Capra, William Wyler, and George Stevens. He expressed that "it was a most exciting period, and he had discovered a new world" (5). Furthermore, when he watched a film, he was "no longer interested in just what the stars were doing but was also observing how the camera was being deployed, when the cuts came, how the narrative unfolded, what were the characteristics that distinguished the work of one director from another" (5). It goes without saying that the

young Ray's avid interest in film directors and their distinctive crafts provided an early exercise in which he would gradually establish his unique cinematic language. Thus, in his Oscar-winning speech, Ray admitted the impact of his engagement with foreign films, particularly American films: "I have learned everything I have learned about the craft of cinema from the making of American films. I have been watching American films very carefully over the years" (Ray's Honorary Award: 1992 Oscars 00: 03:40).

Much before starting his career as a filmmaker, Ray took his first job at D. J. Keymar's Advertising Agency as an illustrator and cover designer of books in April 1943. Gradually, he became a contributing member of the Signet Press, which started printing illustrated copies of the old classics. Ray had worked as a designer for book covers, book illustrations, commercial advertisements, and calligraphy. However, in the late 1940s, Ray found another occupation that enhanced his interest in cinema.

> I had begun writing film scripts, just for the fun of it. I still didn't realize that it was the prelude to my giving up my job and taking up film as a profession. At any rate, without any thought of turning any of them into a film, I wrote script after script. Usually, I would take a story or novel that had been announced as being under production. I would write my own treatment and compare it with the result on the screen. I would even go to the length of preparing a second version, which I surmised would be a better one compared to the version on the screen. More often than not, I was proved right (*My Years with Apu* 18).

Hence, his early interest in cinema had to do with the exercise of turning literary texts into cinema. His preoccupation with adaptation began much earlier than the commencement of his filmmaking career. This rigorous practice of screenplay writing from literature culminated in his mastery of film adaptation in his filmmaking career.

His films cover an expansive range of themes, starting with visualizing the rural lives of colonial Bengal in *Pather Panchali* (1955) or *Ashani Sanket* (*Distant Thunder*, 1973) to the small-town politics of Chandipur in *Ganashatru* (1989) via the 1970s Calcutta in films like *Pratidwandi* (*The Adversary*, 1970) and *Jana Aranya* (*The Middle-Man*, 1975). Sometimes, his films also function as political satire, as in the case of *Hirak Rajar Deshe* (*Kingdom of Diamonds*, 1980), set in the imaginary country of the Diamond King.

The diversity of themes that Ray explores in his film narratives owes much to the selection of their source texts. Among the twenty-nine feature films, Ray has borrowed literary texts for adaptation on twenty-six occasions. The more diverse themes Ray chooses in his source texts, the more different genres of films Ray adds to his filmography. Therefore, adaptation proves to be an essential phenomenon in his filmmaking career. However, this aspect has either been overlooked or only superficially addressed. This thesis aims to explore the main approaches to adaptation in his filmmaking. It also aims to uncover how Ray's approaches to adaptation persist through different stages of his filmmaking.

Based on Ray's writings and views on cinema and film adaptation, this study develops the idea that Ray utilizes the extensive possibilities of cinematic décor and character reconfiguration as methodological strategies to interpret literary texts onto the screen. To examine these consistent methodological approaches of Ray's film adaptation, the thesis studies three films of Ray, namely, *The Postmaster* (a part of *Teen Kanya*, 1961), *Mahanagar* (1963), and *Ganashatru* (1989), and their literary source texts, which are Rabindranath Tagore's 'The Postmaster' (1893), Narendranth Mitra's 'Abataranik' (1949), and Henrik Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* (1882), respectively. Borrowed from their literary origin, each film represents a definite phase in Ray's filmmaking career characterized by unique and contrastive visual styles, settings, and themes. This study

reappraises Ray's ability to engage with literary source texts while developing a distinctive cinematic language that resonates with contemporary audiences.

Literature Review on Ray Scholarship

Ray on Cinema

The earliest literature on Satyajit Ray scholarship dates back to the 1950s. The release of *Pather Panchali* (1955) and its immediate worldwide recognition attracted the attention of film critics and academicians to Ray's cinema. However, the initial reactions of the critics and academicians were mainly reflected in magazine articles, film journal pages, daily newspapers, and other short pieces. A significant section of these writings applauded Ray's efforts to introduce a shift in the traditional Indian filmmaking style and how *Pather Panchali* pioneered that change. Among these were also criticisms of Ray's film, particularly his adaptation of the canonical writers. Ray sometimes replied to criticism of his methods of film adaptation. He was also vocal in commenting on his thoughts on the persisting status of Indian cinema and its limitations. Also, he addressed what could be amended to produce good cinema in Bengal and the larger context of India. Though these writings were primarily published in magazines and newspapers, they were later stitched together into edited volumes. As a result, three books on such writings came into existence: *Our Films, Their Films* (1976), *Speaking of Films* (2005), and *Deep Focus: Reflections on Cinema* (2011). In 2013, *Deep Focus* was reprinted as *Satyajit Ray on Cinema* with a foreword by Shyam Benegal.

The opening statement of *Our Films, Their Films* (1976) informs, "[A] filmmaker rarely writes about films. He is either too busy making one, or too unhappy not to be able to make one, or too exhausted from the last one he made" (1). Still, Ray overcame the challenges of filmmaking

demands and also wrote substantially on cinema. Divided into two parts, 'Our Films' and 'Their Films,' the book distinguishes filmmaking quality and condition in India and the West. In an essay like "What Is Wrong with Indian Films?" Ray states the technical flaws of Indian cinema. In the same article, he also ruminates on the process of adapting a literary text onto the screen. In most of the essays, he delineates his experience of filmmaking and shooting on locations, peppered with anecdotes. At the same time, "Some Aspects of My Craft," another essay from the same book, familiarizes the reader with Ray's crafts, reflecting on the art of designing or décor in his films. In the second part of the book, "Their Films," Ray applauds the quality films of Italian neo-realism, Russian films, and Akira Kurosawa's mastery of Japanese filmmaking.

Originally published in Bengali as *Bishay Chalachhitra* (1982), *Speaking of Films* (2005), translated by Gopa Majumdar, could roughly be identified as a continuation of Ray's previous edited volume *Our Films, Their Films* on commenting about various aspects of his cinematic crafts and sometimes cinema in general through various essays. An essay like "On Charulata," which came out as a result of Ray's response to Mr. Ashok Rudra's criticism of Ray's adaptation of Tagore in the October issue (1964) of the Bengali magazine *Parichay*, tends to highlight the "difficulties of making a film from a piece of literature" (143). Having said that, Ray wants to explain the reasons behind the number of changes the filmmaker applies in turning literary sources into films. In the same manner, Ray ponders the process of adapting Bibhuti Bhusan Banerjee's novel in the Apu Trilogy in his essay "On Apur Sansar."

Satyajit Ray on Cinema (2013), which otherwise bears the title *Deep Focus*, edited by Sandip Ray, follows up the structure of Ray's first edited volume, *Our Films, Their Films*. In its three parts, the book contains essays on Satyajit Ray's filmmaking styles, the broader aspect of Indian cinema, and world cinema. In the first part of the book, both the essays "Notes on

Filming Bibhuti Bhusan" and "Should a Film-maker Be Original?" delineate Ray's approach to adapting a literary text, with emphasis on his first two films adapted from Bengali writer Bibhuti Bhusan Bandyopadhyay's novels. The prolonged discussions on Western movies and directors Jean-Luc Godard and Michelangelo Antonioni in the following two parts assert Ray's awareness of contemporary Western films. It is also true that the Italian neo-realism deeply influenced Ray to make films.

Biographies and Anthologies

Apart from his own writings, Marie Seton's *Portrait of a Director: Satyajit Ray* (1971/2003) is the earliest attempt to sketch out a biographical account of the greatest filmmaker, Satyajit Ray. Seton mapped out the long lineage of ancestral tapestry of Satyajit Ray, establishing the family's reputation and contribution to Bengali art and culture. Therefore, she establishes the link between Ray's ascent to greatness and the family lineage. The chapters on *The Postmaster* and *Mahanagar* are informative and relevant in the context of this thesis. The revised edition of Seton's book, which came out in 2003 with a foreword by Sandip Ray, adds two unpublished writings of Seton. One of them is "Directing—Interiors in Studios," in which Seton reflects on her observation of Ray's direction mechanism during the on-set studio shoot. Seton's observations are significant in the discussion of this thesis.

Chidananda Das Gupta, a film critic and writer, was also one of the earliest critics of Ray's cinema. He was one of the founding members of the Calcutta Film Society along with Satyajit Ray. His book *Satyajit Ray: An Anthology of Statements on Ray and by Ray* (1981) is possibly the earliest anthological collection of critical essays on Ray's films. The account begins with *Pather Panchali* and continues till *Pikoo's Dairy* (1981). The discussion on *The Postmaster* and *Mahanagar* occupies minimal space in the book and is mainly based on explaining the summary of the film plots.

The book also features a lengthy interview with Satyajit Ray, where the filmmaker reflects on his crafts of filmmaking methods, music, scripts, acting, etc.

An extended version of this book manifested in Chidananda Das Gupta's next book, *The Cinema of Satyajit Ray* (1994), which is probably the first full-length anthological study of all of Ray's films. Das Gupta's attempt was to rearrange the films to set up a chronological sequence of insights into the changing Indian social order (3). However, in rearranging Ray's films into chronological order, Das Gupta was aware of the fact that "there would be plenty of gaps in such a sequential arrangement since there was no conscious or consistent desire in the filmmaker to address every layer of the palimpsest of Indian history" (3). Therefore, Das Gupta attempted to investigate the chronicle of more than a century of social change in India through the thirty-seven years of Ray's work (ix). Therefore, through various chronological divisions, Das Gupta groups Ray's films and studies them to explore how they communicate the social change spanning over a century.

Ben Nyce's *Satyajit Ray: A Study of His Films* (1988) is an anthological attempt to study Ray's films, from *Pather Panchali* (1955) to *Ghare Baire* (1984). Nyce's book applauds the auteur aspects of Ray as a filmmaker, alluding to his multi-talented facet and the urge to handle the many faculties of filmmaking on a limited budget allocation (2). His chronological study of Ray's film celebrates the variety of subject matter and mode of expression in the succeeding films rather than repeating past successes (2). Similar to Seton and Das Gupta, Nyce was curious to examine how Ray's theme was concerned with manifesting the monumental process of change, the historical aspect of change, which has taken place in India since the turn of the century—a period during which the country has struggled to move from the feudal past into the twentieth century (3). Nyce's

contribution to studying the change on the 'internal level' by studying the 'internal growth' of the characters is the most brilliant aspect of his study.

Following Marie Seton, Andrew Robinson's *Satyajit Ray, The Inner Eye: The Biography of a Master Film-maker* (1989/2004) is the second attempt to chronicle a biography revisiting Ray's long family lineage to his entry to the filmmaking via his job as an artist in an advertising farm. Revised in two editions, this book contributes a critical essay on all of Ray's films. Through his essays, Robinson studies Ray's films again as "a body of work of incredible range – of period, setting, social class, tone and genre" (viii). He further believes that "no other film-maker, apart maybe from Kurosawa (though his depiction of women is notably inferior to Ray's), has encompassed a whole culture; and no other film-maker, full stop, has covered such a range, from pure farce to high tragedy and from musical fantasies to detective stories" (viii). Therefore, Robinson's critical essays explore how Ray's films chronicle the subtle nuances of Bengali culture. Filled with anecdotes from his several meetings and correspondences with Ray, the book is informative and offers enormous help to the researchers.

As promised to Robinson in a letter, Ray "has long been toying with the idea of writing a book on [my] experiences as a filmmaker, possibly confining [myself] to the Apu Trilogy" (Robinson 2). As a result, *My Years with Apu* (1994) came into being as a posthumous collection with the final edit and revision carried out by Ray's wife, Bijaya Ray, who deeply regretted the incident of Ray's final draft of the book being stolen right after his death. The book offers an insight into the minute details and significant moments of Ray's life, leading to the making of his first film, *Pather Panchali*. Moreover, while filming the trilogy, especially *Pather Panchali*, Ray was acquainted with the challenges of filmmaking and more so because of being a novice and deciding to shoot on location. Taking the readers on this journey while revealing his various crafts, Ray showed, at times, his approach to adapting Bibhuti Bhusan Bandyopadhyay.

On Ray's themes

Darius Cooper's *The Cinema of Satyajit Ray: Between Tradition and Modernity* (2000) is a return to the 20th century Ray studies along the lines of Chidananda Das Gupta, Marie Seton, and Andrew Robinson to situate and evaluate the cinema of Satyajit Ray from "an Indian aesthetics as well as an Indian social and historical perspective" (1). Moreover, Cooper's study aims to single out the "Western and the Indian influences in his films, thereby laying a truly indigenous style and vision that makes his cinema receptive and accessible to the Western as well as the Indian spectator" (1-2). Divided into five parts, the book maps Ray's filmmaking career into five separate movements and studies the films placing them across these movements. Thus, the films belonging to the first five years celebrate everyday life and emotions, which Cooper examines through intricate Rasa theories. The 1960s and 1970s films are labeled as women-centric and men-centric, respectively. The book concludes by arguing how Ray's final films were a response to a city-centric life.

Surabhi Banerjee's *Satyajit Ray: Beyond the Frame* (1996) is an attempt to grasp the multifaced talent of the artist Satyajit Ray beyond the very popular familiarity of a great filmmaker. The second part of the book, primarily, is dedicated to unraveling the fictional writing world of Satyajit Ray, comprising his mastery in crafting science fiction, sleuth narratives, and a diverse range of other short stories. With the subtitle "The Man and the Myth," Banerjee sets out to debunk the popular myth of Ray as a renaissance man and that of Ray as a 'genius' (3-4). Instead of labeling Ray as a Renaissance humanist, she makes an attempt to resolve the seemingly contrapuntal layeredness of his work (5). Thus, Banerjee infers that "the woof of Ray's creative ethos may best be described as a polyphonic'' (5). Similarly, she maps out the family environment of Ray and how he was brought up and trained gradually to become an artist of his stature to disregard the simple tag of 'genius.'

Suranjan Ganguly's *Satyajit Ray: In Search of the Modern* (2007) was written in the late 1990s, and like all other studies on Ray in the 1990s, Ganguly also endeavored to break the conventional tags of Ray as a Renaissance humanist, classicist, etc. Instead, he avers Ray as an enigmatic figure credited with ushering modernity in tradition-bound Indian cinema (1). Ganguly emphasized Ray's upbringing and cultural inheritance, which made him a product of a unique East-West fusion involving a larger struggle to define India, within which he functions as an artist (1-2). Ganguly argues that Ray's modernity is inseparable from [a] sense of the plural that incorporates within itself its history of multiple dislocation…a complex, all-encompassing discourse in which Ray seeks to find a pattern within diversity (4). Keeping in mind Ray's focus on the history in the making of a nation, Ganguly prefers to rearrange Ray's oeuvre, ignoring the chronology and thereby claims that Ray's history of India would begin with *Shatranj ki Khilari/The Chess Players* (1977), *Charulata* (1964), *Devi/The Goddess* (1960), etc. By situating his narratives not far back than the 19th century, Ray associated the birth of modernity during that period with the coming of the white men (6). To dig deeper into Ray's negotiations with the modern, this book focuses on six of his major films made between 1955 and 1970—*Pather Panchali*, *Apatajito*, *Apur Sansar/The World of Apu* (1959), *Charulata*, *Aranyer Din Ratri*, and *Pratidwandi/The Adversary* (1970).

Reena Dube's *The Chess Players and Postcolonial Theory: Culture, Labour and the Value of Alterity* (2005) is a postcolonial attempt to study Ray based on his film *Shatranj Ke Khilari* (*The Chess Players*, 1977). Keya Ganguly's *Cinema, Emergence, and the Films of Satyajit Ray* (2010) further investigates Ray's response to modernism and *avant-gardism,* analyzing six of Ray's selected films. John W. Hood's *Beyond the World of Apu: The Films of Satyajit Ray* (2008) is another compendium of Ray's entire oeuvre, in which the films are grouped under thematic concerns, sidestepping the limitation of chronology. Mainak Biswas' edited collection *Apu and After: Revisiting Ray's Cinema* (2006) features a series of essays that examine

Ray's perspectives on modernism, nationhood, and contemporary urban life, as well as his interpretation of literature on screen.

Bengali writings on Ray

Besides this host of literature in English over the decades, there is also a considerably vast trajectory of Bengali writing on Ray. The most pertinent among them have been reviewed for the purpose of this study. Subrata Rudra's edited collection, *Satyajit: Jibon ar Sahitya* (1996), is a compilation of various essays and reflections on Satyajit Ray. Contributions from Ray's actors, crew members, film critics, and academics on diverse aspects of Ray as an artist enhance the richness of the collection, making it an essential reference for this study. *Satyajit-Pratibha* (1993), edited by Bijit Ghosh, is also an excellent compilation of essays on Ray contributed by prominent Ray enthusiasts. Sankarlal Bhattacharya's *Satyajitke Niye* (2005) reflects on the writer, filmmaker, and graphic designer Satyajit Ray.

Ujjal Chakraborty, filmmaker, artist, writer, and a long-term collaborator of Ray, published his collection of essays, *Satyajit Bhabana*, in 2010. These essays cover a wide range of topics, from Ray's approach towards adaptation, the Feluda stories, the music of the contemporary city, and Ray's contribution to children's literature. His collaborations with Anirudha Dhar and Atanu Chakraborty resulted in an expansive study of Ray's cinema, *Panchali Theke Oscar*— Vol. 1 & 2 (2011). Sunit Sengupta's *Satyajit Ray* (2016) is also significant since it is one of the few fuller biographical accounts of Satyajit Ray in Bengali.

On Ray's film adaptations

As I review further into the decades of research and analytical studies on Ray's films, it seems evident that one aspect of Ray's films, which has long been ignored or not given enough attention, is Ray's methodological strategies to adapt literary text into cinema. The above crucial critical studies on Ray emphatically ignored the films' literary

origin, thereby ignoring Ray's process of selecting and interpreting literary texts in the adapted films. Lately, a very scant amount of literature has engaged in exploring Ray's art of adaptation in transforming the literary text. These studies place the literary text and Ray's film side by side to make a comparative analysis and find the process of adaptation based on the difference between the thematic aspect and the cultural grounding of the texts.

M. Asaduddin and Anuradha Ghosh's edited collection *Filming Fiction: Tagore, Premchand, and Ray* (2012) comprises a number of critical essays that engage conspicuously on Ray's adaptation of Rabindranath Tagore and Munshi Premchand, though the word 'adaptation' has not been used either in the title of the book or in the title of the essays, barring one or two. Regarding the adaptation of Tagore's work, the book concentrates on two of Ray's Tagore adaptations, *Charulata* (1964) and *Ghare Baire* (1984), with a diverse range of studies focusing on inter-semiotic translation between the medium, the process of transcreation, the feminist take on Ray's recreation of Tagore, etc. The essays on Premchand adaptations are solely devoted to critiquing colonialism through Ray's cinematic frames.

Tamal Dasgupta's *Understanding the Screenplays of Satyajit Ray: The Art of Adaptation* (2015) is an attempt to scrutinize the process of adaptation from literary text to Ray's films. As indicated in the title, the book attempts to analyze the process of adaptation during the phase of screenplay writing. Thus, this book makes an interesting observation that the amplitude of pictorial details in Bibhuti Bhusan Bandyopadhyay's literary writings directly contributed to the pictorial elaboration of the screenplay (59-60). However, Ray's screenplay for adapting Tagore lacked that pictorial elaboration as the latter's work was not as pictorially enriched as Bibhuti Bhusan Bandyopadhyay (60). The book establishes how the addition of music plays an integral role in the process of screenplay writing in adaptation.

Sharif Mahmud's *Satyajit Ray: Indian Master of Adaptation in Films* (2017) analyzes three of Ray's most well-known films, *Pather Panchali*, *Charulata,* and *Ghare Baire*, and aims to uncover the comparative differences and gradual changes in Ray's adaptations. More recently, Hirendrakumar Patel's dissertation "Adaptation from Literature to Cinema: An Analysis of Satyajit Ray's Selected Movies" (2021) has examined The Apu Trilogy films and adaptations of Premchand's stories, including summaries of the original texts and providing detailed plot analysis of the films.

While these studies have sought to tackle the long-overdue questions surrounding Ray's methodological adaptation process, their heavy reliance on comparative analysis and the pursuit of differences in the texts raises concerns about the ongoing issue of fidelity in adaptation. Consequently, these studies highlight a persistent research gap in Ray's approach to adaptation that must be addressed. What significant and unique adaptation strategies were employed by Satyajit Ray throughout his filmmaking career? How can we recognize these very strategies in film adaptations? What criteria should be used to select films that demonstrate the consistent and familiar elements Ray incorporates when interpreting literary texts for the screen? Furthermore, what roles do these strategies play in interpreting literary works, and how do they contribute to the film's narrative?

The Theoretical Realm in Adaptation Studies

Adaptation studies scholar Thomas Leitch, in his article "Adaptation Studies at the Crossroad," announces, "after years of being stuck in the backwaters of the academy, adaptation studies is on the move" (63). In her seminal edited collection on adaptation studies, *A Companion to Literature, Film, and Adaptation* (2012), Deborah Cartmell titles her introductory essay "100+ Years of Adaptations, or, Adaptation as the Art Form of Democracy." The two parts of the title convey two different connotations.

The first part eulogizes the celebration of the practice of film adaptation for more than a century now. The next part critically evaluates the reception of adaptation as an art form after one hundred years of its inception. Cartmell here alludes to William Hunter's critical essay on the film "The Art Form of Democracy?" (1932). Hunter contends that art can never be democratic, and its exposure should be maintained to a limited set of people because the terms 'art' and 'democracy' are incompatible. Therefore, Hunter's statement reveals how film, in general, was received amidst so much criticism from critics and academics in the initial years of the 20th century, let alone adaptations.

Since the beginning of cinema, adaptations have been a staple of the film business. Among the earliest films were adaptations of literary works (Cartmell 2). Although there were many reasons for the substantial number of adaptations in the fledging years of cinema as an art form, Cartmell believes that adaptations were a way of bringing great works of literature to the masses as some filmmakers were of the view that a dependency on literature or "great art" would also elevate the status of the film (Cartmell 2). As a result, the film was despised by literary critics as cheapening, contaminating, and potentially threatening the literary text (Cartmell 2). The great modernist exponent of 20th-century fiction, Virginia Woolf, in her essay "The Cinema" (1926), expresses her disappointment in watching the film adaptation of Dostoevsky's *Anna Karenina*. She implies the vulnerabilities of film adaptation and how it is doing a disservice to both literature and cinema.

In the face of widespread criticism surrounding cinema and its adaptations in Europe and America, Rabindranath Tagore, the Indian poet and Nobel Laureate, recognized the vast potential of this emerging technological art form. Linda Hutcheon, in the introductory chapter of her pivotal edited book *A Theory of Adaptation* (2013), uses the epigraph from Rabindranath Tagore's statement, "Cinema is still playing second fiddle to

literature" (1). In a 1929 letter written to Murary Bhaduri, brother of Sisir Kumar Bhaduri, a thespian who also introduced Tagore's works on stage and screen, Tagore expresses his views on cinema and adaptation. According to Tagore, cinema is dependent on literature. However, he attributed the dependence of the cinema to the general ignorance of the masses to which cinema caters (Mandal 8). Therefore, Tagore's critical approach towards the new medium was directed to establish the independence of the new art form. Moreover, his proactive engagement with many film adaptation and scriptwriting projects further proves his reliance on this novel art form.

His first encounter with filmmaking and adaptation was when Madhu Basu interacted with Tagore about adapting his short story 'Manbhanjan' into a film (Mandal 7). It is also known that Tagore engaged even in the writing task of the script, added some dialogue, and advised *Giribala* as a name for the title (of the film) (8). Tagore wrote another screenplay from his play *Tapati*, which was to be filmed, featuring Tagore as an actor (8). However, for some unprecedented reasons, it proved unsuccessful, with only three reels being shot (8). Tagore's most successful endeavor in this regard was the adaptation of his famous poem "Pujarini" into *Notir Puja*, which was shot over four days and filmed like a stage play, breaking the conventional rules of cinema (9). It was directed by Tagore himself, who also made a cameo appearance, and the film was finally released in 1932. According to Pulin Behari Sen, in 1936, Tagore integrated his novel *Rajarshi*, the play *Biswarjan,* and the story 'Dalia' to compose a new play suitable for the cinema. Divided into four sections, this incomplete script, although not properly fleshed out, proves his growing interest in the new medium (10).

Tagore was aware of the adaptation from his several attempts. Thus, he was not against the phenomenon of literature to film adaptations. Instead, expressed his concern over the quality of filmmaking in India. In the

detailed letter to Bhaduri, he advocated for a few pointers that should elevate the status of the new medium. Firstly, Tagore reckons that cinema should be an independent art form, breaking the shell of its literary influence. Secondly, cinema requires its unique language, and most importantly, it requires financial investment (Tagore, qtd. in Mandal 8).

However, between the 1930s and the 1950s, a host of influential essays in film criticism attempted to establish the independence of cinematic art and thereby paved the way for the initiation of discussion in adaptation studies. Among these crucial essays, Walter Benjamin's groundbreaking work, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility" (1936), was a frontrunner to claim the authenticity of technical art like photography and film. Although Benjamin mentions the risk that cinematic art may strip the aura of the existing art like literature or painting, this newborn medium can make art accessible through its technical reproducibility. Benjamin's statement can directly contradict William Hunter's views, as mentioned already in this study, that art and democracy shouldn't go together. Therefore, Benjamins' effort was to establish the credibility of the new art form by prioritizing montage and mechanical precision and offering new modes of storytelling and perception. In the 1940s, Soviet filmmaker and film theorist Sergei Eisenstein, in his essay "Dickens, Griffith, and the Film Today" (1944), argued for the connection between 19th-century literary techniques, mainly reflected in Charles Dickens' novels, and the evolution of cinematic language, as pioneered by D.W. Griffith. Eisenstein says the relationship between literature and cinema is "organic, and the 'genetic' line of descent is quite consistent" (Eisenstein 195). He highlights how Dickens' writing, with its vivid detail, shifting perspective, and parallel action, caters to Griffith's exploration of the art of montage and crosscutting techniques. Eisenstein supports adaptation as he claims that by inheriting older art, such as literature, cinema develops something unique of its own.

André Bazin, the monumental figure of film criticism in the 20th century, defends adaptation as a legitimate practice in the cinema culture. In his essay, "Adaptation, or the Cinema as Digest" (1948), Bazin considers adaptation as an act of creation rather than reproduction. To Bazin, the word 'digest' holds an affirmative sense as it conveys that cinematic adaptations make literature more accessible to the general public, not through the resulting simplification (in cinematic art) but by the mode of expression itself (Bazin, qt. in Andrew 77). Bazin completely disregards "the inviolability of a work of art," a modern notion created by literary critics that suffers any attempt to reproduce or the act of adaptation (72). Most importantly, Bazin argues that adaptations are not inherently inferior to their literary sources but rather distinct works of art that can focus on interpreting the original work's spirit while embracing the cinematic medium's specific strength. Despite the diversity of their voices, the primary concerns of these continental war and post-war film theorists, Benjamin, Bazin, Astruc, and Eisenstein, foreground what developed into the central concern of adaptation studies in the following decades (Rezaie 18).

In the 1950s, the publication of George Bluestone's massively influential *Novels into Films* (1957), 'the earliest Anglo-American academic monograph on literature and film,' marked a defining moment that started the academic discussion on film adaptation (Aragay 12). However, Bluestone upheld the hierarchal superiority of the novel over the film by claiming that "the novel is more complex because its history is longer and its material more refined. There is no such thing as *the* novel (Bluestone 7-8; italics in the original). On the other hand, Bluestone believes that because of the cinema's comparative youth, aesthetics has been tempted to treat it like a fledgling, measuring its capabilities by the standards of older, more traditional arts (VII). As a result, Bluestone exercises strong medium-specific studies focusing on the 'unique and specific properties' of each medium (6). As a result, he renders that novel and film are mutually 'hostile' or 'antithetical' (2-23). He studies six case

studies of adaptation and, through their analysis, establishes the fidelity criterion and medium-specific limitations of the adaptations.

The 1970s was the decade when film studies became fully institutionalized in the academy. In the field of adaptation, after two decades of Bluestone's monumental monograph, the assumption that literature was the superior medium was an enduring one (Aragay 16). During this period came Geoffrey Wagner's seminal work *The Novel and the Cinema* (1975), which was still trapped by an unspoken reliance on the fidelity criterion and a concomitant (formalist) focus on the literary source/filmed adaptation binary pair, to the exclusion of intertextual and contextual factors (Aragay 16). Wagner proposes his tripartite classification models, in which he identifies transposition, commentary, and analogy. In the first category, transposition, 'a novel is directly given on the screen, with the minimum of apparent interference' (Wagner 222). Then, the commentary is 'where an original is taken and ... altered in some respect' revealing a different intention on the part of the filmmaker, rather than infidelity or outright violation' (223-224). Whereas an analogy treats "fiction as a point of departure" (223)… and "cannot be indicted as a violation of a literary original since the director has not attempted (or has only minimally attempted) to reproduce the original" (227). Through his attempts to lay out these categories, "Wagner is obsessively concerned with 'defending' adaptations of any sort from the charge of 'infidelity,'" while his attempts… have the perverse effect of foregrounding the severely limited theoretical and practical validity of any model that relies on the centrality of the literary source or 'original' (Aragay 16).

The 1980s was a decade during which the fields of literary studies, film studies, and their interface, adaptation studies, were to be utterly transformed (Aragay 18). The adaptation scholars questioned Bluestone's media-specific approach and looked toward advancing the field. During this time, as Sarah Cardwell notes from her reading of Eisenstein, Bluestone,

and Andrew, the theorists deciphered that "adaptations from novel to screen display many similarities, raises significant problems for medium-specific theories in general" (Cardwell 49). This gradual realization of the theorists "in turn potentially liberates adaptation studies from the formalist, binary source/adaptation straitjacket" (Aragay 18). Dudley Andrew's groundbreaking essay "The Well-Worn Muse: Adaptation in Film History and Theory" (1980), reprinted as "Adaptation" in D. Andrew's *Concepts in Film Theory* (1984)[2] , explicitly rejected Bluestone's medium-specific viewpoint. Andrew's famous statement— (I)t is time for adaptation studies to take a sociological turn— opened up a new horizon of adaptation studies (Andrew 104). He urged the theorists not to fight battles over the essence of the media or the inviolability of individual artworks. The study of adaptation should partake in the universal situation of film practice, which is dependent on the aesthetic system of the cinema in a particular era and that era's cultural needs and pressures (106). Therefore, the phenomenon of adaptation should be perceived as a cultural practice to understand the world from which it comes and the one toward which it points (106).

Brian McFarlane's *Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation* (1996), the single most important monograph on adaptation to emerge in the 1990s, was no doubt instrumental in unsettling the primacy of fidelity as a major criterion for judging film adaptations (Aragay 23). McFarlane remarks that "discussion of adaptation has been bedevilled by the fidelity issue…[F]idelity criticism depends on a notion of the text as having and rendering up to the (intelligent) reader a single, correct 'meaning' which the film- maker has either adhered to or in some sense violated or tampered with (McFarlane 8). He accused critics of encouraging filmmakers to see it as a desirable goal in adapting literary works (9). Moreover, following Roland Barthes' narratorial approach, McFarlane distinguishes between two approaches to adaptation processes, which he labels *transfer* and *adaptation proper* (13). *Transfer* is the process whereby certain narrative elements of novels are revealed as amenable to display in

the film. In contrast, the widely used term adaptation proper will refer to the processes by which other novelistic elements must find quite different equivalences in the film medium when such equivalences are sought or are available at all (13). However, McFarlane's narratological approach is narrowly formalistic in its marginalization of the bearing of cultural and industrial conditions on the process of adaptation (Aragay 23).

With the advent of the new millennium, a new horizon opens for adaptation studies from the contribution of the new generation of adaptation scholars represented by Thomas Leitch, Linda Hutcheon, Robert Stam, Kamilla Elliott, Christine Geraghty, and Simone Murray. This host of scholars revolt against the concerns and results of comparative and medium-specific adaptation studies (Rezaie 10), and the field witnesses a historical boom in critical publications, interdisciplinary theories, and anti-theories on adaptations and adaptation studies (Rezaie 11). In a critical collection published in 2000, *Film Adaptation*, editor James Naremore emphasizes the need for adaptation studies to move away from formalistic concerns indeed and to study adaptations in the light of contextual (economic, cultural, political, commercial, industrial, educational) and intertextual factors (Aragay 25). Robert Ray's "The Field of Literature and Film," published in this volume, denounces the prevalent one-on-one comparative case studies.

In the same volume, Robert Stam, borrowing from Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of dialogism, proposes a highly productive view of adaptation as intertextual dialogism in which "[F]ilm adaptations ... are caught up in the ongoing whirl of intertextual reference and transformation of texts generating other texts in an endless process of recycling, transformation, and transmutation, with no clear point of origin" ("Beyond Fidelity" 66). Stam's dialogic approach towards adaptations expands and evolves through his subsequent three collections, beginning with *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory* and *Practice of Film Adaptation* (2005), co-edited with Alessandra Raengo. Inserting adaptation in the field of

intertextuality has the effect of debunking the original/copy binary pair, which is the basis of traditional adaptation studies (Aragay 25).

Kamilla Elliott's *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate* (2003) proposes and develops a more comprehensive model for studying the embedded intertextuality of verbal and visual texts (Rezaie 11). Her adaptation model argues persuasively for a looking glass analogy for adaptation, 'a reciprocally transformative model of adaptation, in which the film ... metamorphoses the novel and is, in turn, metamorphosed by it. Adaptation under such a model ... is mutual and reciprocal inverse transformation' (Elliott 229). In such a model, the metamorphic process of adaptation is not linear but cyclical, 'memory works both ways, forwards and backwards', and 'there can be no real return to origins' since 'film adaptation changes the books films adapt' (230-231). Elliot's lines of argument have been discussed and extended in the various chapters by Mireia Aragay and Gemma López, José Ángel García Landa, Sara Martín, and Pedro Javier Pardo in Mireia Aragay's edited collection *Books in Motion: Adaptation, Intertextuality, Authorship* (2005).

Linda Hutcheon's groundbreaking work *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006) influences the reach of the field widely and effectively as she states, anyone who has ever experienced an adaptation (and who hasn't?) has a theory of adaptation, conscious or not,' which justifies 'the multivocality of adaptation theory' (Hutcheon xiii; Rezaie 16). Elliot's primary effort was to recognize the adaptations across the medium as she claims "[M]ost of the work done on adaptation has been carried out on cinematic transpositions of literature, but a broader theorizing seems warranted in the face of the phenomenon's variety and ubiquity" (xiv). Hutcheon looks at adaptation as a dynamic process by putting "What? Who? Why? How? Where? When?" questions that earlier case studies had simply overlooked because they were preoccupied with questions of how to translate medium-specific signs (Leitch, *The Oxford Handbook* 16). Hurcheon's monograph, the

indispensable guide to Adaptation Studies 2.0[3], offered a concise but thorough and systematic methodological overview, which dramatized the way adaptation studies had moved from one phase to the next: not by resolving its central debates and moving on, but by bracketing or rejecting old paradigms (17).

While the new millennium experienced rapid growth in adaptation studies, the scholars addressed the prejudiced beliefs of the field. Enumerating the sources of hostility to film and adaptation, Robert Stam mentions, "*anti-corporeality*, a distaste for the unseemly 'embodiedness' of the filmic text, the *seen* to recycle a venerable pun, is regarded as obscene." He states that film offends through its inescapable materiality, its incarnated, fleshy, enacted characters, its real locales and palpable pros, its carnality, and visceral shocks to the nervous system (Stam, "Introduction" 6). The charges are upon the film's 'inescapable materiality, its incarnated, fleshy, enacted characters, its real locales and palpable pros,' that discredit cinema as a serious art form, which deals in surfaces, literally ''superficial'' contrasting with the words of literature which require in-depth analysis (6-7). However, Stam's acknowledgment of the cinema's dynamic creative potential through the visual expression of materiality, enacted characters, and real locales derives from his concept of intertextual dialogism rooted in the post-structuralism—particularly Mikhail Bakhtin, Julia Kristeva, and Gérard Genette.

Linda Hutcheon was also extensively influenced by the post-structuralist intertextual approach in *A Theory of Adaptation*, where she perceives adaptation as palimpsests, a layering process (6). What Richard finds especially appealing in Hutcheon's description of an adaptation's mosaic 'palimpsestuousness' is that its analysis of textual identity usefully gestures towards a mode of *textural* appreciation (21). This *textural* appreciation conceives the materiality on the screen and its enacted characters as sources in opening the layering process of adaptation. Dudley

Andrew points out that an adaptation is a palimpsest, albeit a 'peculiar one [as] the surface layer engages, rather than replaces, a previous inscription' (Andrew, "Adapting Cinema to History" 191). Thereby, Andrew here hints at the significance of the cinematic design and the texture for the adaptation in appropriating the source. Although Andrew evokes fidelity discourse by claiming the adaptation being congruent with structuring text, his perspectives here are helpful as they expand adaptation from the mere transfer of narrative to foreground how film aesthetics—its mise en scène, cinematography, sound, and editing—actively enrich the adaptation (Richards 21-22).

Sarah Cardwell, in her book *Adaptation Revisited: Television and the Classic Novel* (2002), recalls the 'gut feelings,' emotional reactions, of the earlier writers on adaptations, whose intuitive writing is frequently more 'engaged and engaging' (31). She thinks that "thought followed after emotional response" (31). Therefore, Cardwell wants the writers to become viewers first who engage with the film with all their senses. To enhance the engagement with the film, Cardwell further proposes her theory of "aesthetics of adaptation," where she proposes both non-comparative approaches as well as comparative approaches. In the first, she rejects the traditional comparative analysis of adaptations to interpret and evaluate adaptations (films and programs) (Adaptation Revisited, 52). She asks for attentive responsiveness to the film as an artwork, and the comparative approach should not reduce the artistic agenda of the film or the program (52). With the range of artistic agenda, Cardwell notices the setting, location, costume, music, and the camera's ability to focus on the small details.

Through a comparative approach, the study of the unique features of different art forms distinguishes them from one another and constitutes their artistic potential (59). By comparing it with literature and the need for close analysis, Cardwell again focuses on the temporal characteristics of the

medium specificity of the film to understand how single shots and frames are made to capture the more minor details on the screen. Therefore, in both her approaches, she finally builds on the aesthetic of adaptations by emphasizing the attention to interpret and evaluate the film as an art form with its medium specificity. Cardwell's medium-specific aesthetics resonates with Linda Costanzo Cahir's statement that it is "[through] the process of translation a fully new text—a materially different entity—is made, one that simultaneously has a strong relationship with its original source, yet is fully independent of it" (14). Though he prefers the word translation over adaptation, he focuses on the materiality of adaptation as a new entity, which this study gradually seeks to develop.

Although the materiality of adaptation has long been in the discussion, Kyle Meikle's proposition of the 'Rematerializing Adaptation Theory' (2013) witnesses an intellectual culmination in this discussion. Before him, Simone Murray, though she titles her article "Materializing Adaptation Theory," does not examine the material physical texture of screen adaptations. Instead, the materiality of adaptations represents production contexts, distribution channels, and reception practices, indicating that the sociological approaches would be productive in revealing the political economy of adaptation (11-15). However, addressing Murray's study, Meikle further develops and relocates the locus of 'the material culture of the adaptive process' to study the visual, physical material on the screen, including nonhuman actors and other bodily substances.

David Evan Richard's *Film Phenomenology and Adaptation: Sensuous Elaboration* (2021) is possibly the most recent addition to exploring the sensual experience of screen adaptations. Adopting the phenomenological model of film studies, Evan Richard's work emphasizes "the spectator's sensual experience of adaptations or 'the lived experience of adaptation' before screen adaptations can be categorized in terms of their cultural function and meaning" (17). Richard surmises the long-standing

debate on how "iconophobia/logophilia has thwarted sustained interest in the sensual properties of an adaptation" (18). Similarly, "the stigma of fidelity blocked adaptation studies from exploring the sensual and embodied dimensions of screen adaptations" (18). Although Richard's work veers more towards the spectator's sensual experience with the character, it emphasizes the need to study the visual materials on the screen. Therefore, Richard's work engages with both the materiality of the visual materials on the screen and the body's materiality of the characters.

The argument of this thesis engages with the concept of the materiality of the adaptation studies and proceeds to reveal the materiality of the cinematic décor, set décor, of Ray's select films. Thus, it explores how the materiality of set décor helps adapt the literary narratives, conveying literal and rhetorical meanings. The study further uses David Evan Ricard's 'embodied theory of adaptation' to understand the materiality of the reconfigured characters on screen, where the focus is not placed on the body alone; instead, it examines the changes in the character's behavior, actions, and expressions as a whole on the screen from their literary sources. In his adaptation, Ray transforms the imagined characters from the literary texts into fully realized screen personas. In the three films analyzed, these reconfigured characters embody Ray's vision and ideals, evolving to create a more assertive and optimistic emotional resonance that may be absent or unintended in the original literary works. Thus, it explores how the optimistic appeals of the characters materially resonate with the spectators.

Reevaluating Ray's Approach to Adaptation

Film adaptation was a familiar practice in Bengali cinema before Satyajit Ray emerged as a director. However, among the practitioners and critics, there was no significant engagement in the discourse of film adaptation in Bengali cinema. As the discussion above shows, very few critics from Europe and America emerged to defend adaptation until the 1940s. In the

case of Bengali cinema, Tagore explicitly shared his views on the potential of cinematic art and film adaptation. On the other hand, Satyajit Ray's landmark film, *Pather Panchali* (1955), an adaptation of Bibhuti Bhusan Bandyopadhyay's classic eponymous novel and its worldwide recognition, sparked the debate on the fidelity of the adaptation of a Bengali classic into a film. The criticism even aggravated when Ray proceeded to adapt another great Bengali literary master, Rabindranath Tagore, into two films, *Teen Kanya*, an anthological adaptation of Tagore's three short stories, and *Charulata* (1964) from Tagore's long short story 'Nostonir.' As is often the case with any culture, filmmakers adapting classical literature encounter numerous criticisms concerning their ability to preserve the essence of the original work. It was not an exception for Ray when he adapted classical texts of Bibhuti Bhusan Bandyopadhyay and Rabindranath Tagore as his films fell prey to fidelity criticism by the Bengali film critics and literary connoisseurs. In response to such criticism, Ray often penned answers that offered many insights into Ray's concept of film adaptation. Moreover, Ray's short essays for local magazines and newspapers also conveyed his ideas on Indian cinema, filmmaking, and adaptation. Additionally, his later interviews provide valuable insights into his views on his film adaptation.

In his essay on "What Is Wrong with Indian Films?" (included in *Our Films, Their Films*), Ray avers that "in the adaptations of novels in [Indian cinema], one of two courses has been followed: either the story has been distorted to conform to the Hollywood formula, or it has been produced with such devout faithfulness to the original that the purpose of a filmic interpretation has been defeated (22). The most crucial finding from this statement by Ray is Ray's emphasis on the words 'filmic interpretation.' For Ray, the filmic interpretation changes the words from the page to the images on the celluloid. As Ray further reflects on the point, he explains, "I choose a story or a novel for certain elements in it which appeal to me. In the process of writing the screenplay, the theme may be modified, but most of the original elements will be retained. Often, the

screenplay evolves as a criticism of the original" (Ray, "The Politics of Humanism: An Interview" 131). So, the filmic interpretation on the screen is a result of the 'criticism of the original.' As evident from many of Ray's adaptations, the criticism happens for several reasons, such as relocating a story to a different time, the director's urge to treat a character differently, etc.

Apart from reflecting on his process of screenplay writing as a crucial stage of adaptation, Ray extends his views towards the selection of literary texts. To answer the question of what inspired Ray to choose Bibhuti Bhusan Bandopadhyay's novel *Pather Panchali* for his debut film, he said that "the simplest and truest answer would, of course, be that it is one of the most filmable of all Bengali novels" ("Notes on Filming Bibhuti Bhusan" 9). Thus, it leads him to state that "the true basis of the film style of *Pather Panchali* is not neorealist cinema or any other school of cinema or even any individual work of cinema, but the novel of Bibhuti Bhusan itself" (10). Ray's apprehension to focus on the pictorial quality of the literary text may remind one of Sergei Eisenstein's essay "Dickens, Griffith, and the Film Today," in which he argues that Dickens' 19th-century writing, with its use of vivid detail, shifting perspective, and parallel action cater to Griffith's evaluation of cinematic language with the exploration of the art of montage and crosscutting techniques. Ray banks upon the 'casual narrative structure' and 'natural film material' of Bibhuti Bhusan's novel, which he translates into the film (10).

Along the line, Ray further opines on his ideas on the fidelity of adapting texts for his films. According to his process of adaptation, "transformation (from literary source text) is inevitable" (11). Ray is also aware of the fact that no extended work of fiction has ever been translated to the screen without considerable excision (10-11). For Ray's theorization, the process of translation to the screen does not account for the mere recounting of incidents from the novel; instead, the translation must aim to

be faithful to the spirit and not to the letter (11). Most importantly, to Ray's conviction, he discovered that "although the film of *Pather Panchali* left out much from the book, what remained so closely conformed to what people liked in the book that the omissions were largely forgiven" (11). Therefore, Ray retains the filmable from the literary source, and the omissions are often considered 'the criticism of the original.' In fact, Ray is faithful to the literary author in determining the pictorial qualities of the written text.

Another substantial aspect that appeals to Ray regarding the selection of literary text and its cinematic transformation is "the cinematic possibilities (by which he implies both visual and dramatic) of the contrast" (12). The revelation is clearly visible when Ray explains his decision to make *Aparajito* from Bibhuti Bhushan Banerjee's eponymous novel. The visual contrast of the film refers to the three contrasting presences of the locales: Benares, a standard Bengali village, and the city of Calcutta. On the other hand, the dramatic contrast erupts from the relationship between "the widowed mother and the adolescent son, intensely dramatized by a profound revelation of the author'' (12).

Drawing from the elaboration above, one can decipher Ray's emphasis on two aspects of his craft, which he applies as the primary methodological strategy to adapt films— the first one is the visual aspect of the mise-en-scène, and the second one is the dramatic aspect of the character reconfiguration. In Ray's films, mise-en-scène is essential in the visual narrative. Among the crucial elements in the mise-en-scène, the cinematic décor or set design, the setting of surroundings, lighting, costume, and props acquire special attention in the film narrative. As a curious exercise, after reading a literary text and deciding to make it a film, Ray used to make sketches and drawings of the sets, characters, scenes, and other necessary visuals. These sketches would be of pivotal significance as Ray would want to make the mise-en-scène of the film resemble the sketches. Therefore, the

mise-en-scène on the screen, originating from the sketches, holds paramount importance as it communicates Ray's immediate visualization of the literary text. Hence, the mise-en-scène, or the cinematic decor, or the visual material on the screen, becomes a method of interpreting the text onto the screen.

On his long voyage back to India from his tour to London in 1950, Ray created elaborate sketches of the scenes for *Pather Panchali*, which would generally describe the film in sequence like a storyboard (*My Years with Apu* 25, 31). More intriguingly, Ray admitted that "there was never a fully developed screenplay of *Pather Panchali*, only a sheaf of notes and sketches" (30). Therefore, the lyrical appeal and pictorial details of rural life conveyed in Bibhuti Bhusan's novel conspicuously translate to Ray's mise-en-scène or décor on the screen via his sketches. Therefore, the décor or the material on the screen evokes one of Ray's crucial methodological strategies to interpret literary text on the screen.

Although *Pather Panchali* appeals to the lyrical details of picturesque village life, Ray's filmography advances to deal with various other themes, locales, and settings. Therefore, the mise-en-scène or the material on the screen may not appear richly decorative on all occasions. Nevertheless, the cinematic set décor or the set design seems to be the most essential element of the mise-en-scène in Ray's films. Therefore, this thesis explores how Ray's application of the cinematic décor or the set décor conveys the methodological approach of Ray's film adaptation, unveiling the multilayered meaning of the narrative in Ray's films by analyzing the décor.

Equal importance is given to the aspect of character reconfiguration in Ray's methodological approach to film adaptation. As set décor critically interprets Ray's reading of the literary texts, the character reconfiguration also contributes to Ray's process of adaptation in critically reshaping the narrative in the film. Beyond the general impression of 'criticism of the

original,' the urge for character reconfiguration springs from many reasons, like situating the character in different circumstances demands a change in their behavior, restructuring the narrative plot, adding dramatic elements introducing new characters, and sometimes conveying a director's ideas or messages through the mouthpiece of his characters. The emphasis, therefore, on these two methodological strategies helps facilitate the study of a film by analyzing the narrative point of view.

Interpreting these two distinct strategies does not lead to any analytical overlap within the film; instead, each adaptation strategy is assessed based on its own merits. A key question persists: how does the director give dynamic treatment to these strategies across multiple films? This thesis takes up this question and explores how the set design in Ray's films critically engages with literary texts in their cinematic adaptations, set in varying locales and environments. Central to this adaptation strategy is also Ray's ability to create certain recurring characteristics that allow him to interpret literary works, regardless of the specific setting. Additionally, the reconfiguration of characters exhibits a consistent pattern throughout various phases of Ray's filmmaking career. This thesis thus also aims to uncover the common elements shared by the three selected films in their adaptation process and how these elements contribute to their success.

Why *The Postmaster*, *Mahanagar*, and *Ganashatru*?

Scholars and critics have often tended to mark the prolific career of Satyajit Ray's films in different phases. Chidananda Das Gupta has grouped the films based on chronology and thematic aspects. He labels the division as 'The Apu Trilogy,' 'The Rest of the First Ten Years,' 'The Rest of the First Ten Years,' 'The Last Phase,' etc., as already mentioned in the literature review section, Darius Cooper's apprehension of Ray's filmography stands on his collating films based on the subject matter. John W. Wood's study of Ray's films is dedicated to grouping them into thematic lines like 'The Urban Middle Class,' 'The Calcutta Triptych,' 'The Tribute

to Tagore,' etc. Wood's emphasis is clearly directed to the thematic alliance in grouping the films, not the general chronological order.

Therefore, among scholars, there is an emphasis on studying the films either in chronological order or in thematic lines. On the other hand, Ray's rich filmography also grabs attention to notice a line of division based on their setting and apparently visible material on the screen. Following this line of argument, it can be asserted that the settings of Ray's films primarily cater to rural, urban, and semi-urban or small-town locations. While films with all three settings can be identified throughout his career, there still can be a chronological demarcation in which Ray was mostly preoccupied with one particular setting— be it rural, urban, or other. Therefore, the period from *Pather Panchali* (1955) to *Abhijan* (1962) may be marked for Ray's preoccupation with rural settings, with only one exception of *Parash Pathar* (1958) among over ten films in that phase. Starting with *Mahanagar* (1963) till the early 1980s, Ray predominantly locates his films in an urban setting with the exception of *Ashani Sanket* (1973) or the imaginary setting of *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen* (1968) and *Hirak Rajar Deshe* (1980) in the productive phase of making as many as fifteen feature films. The last three films center around the small-town setting, with the majority of the visuals confined to indoor spaces.

Based on this categorization of visual contrasts and cinematic decor of Ray's films, this thesis selects three films, *The Postmaster*, *Mahanagar*, and *Ganashatru*, from three different phases, maintaining the chronological order of their release. The visual material on the screen is studied mostly by analyzing the set décor or design in those settings and is often augmented by other visual material on the screen. It is evident that each film falls into a different phase and carries varying visual differences. The selection of films with contrasting visuals also complements Ray's process of literary text selection, as he used to be intrigued by the contrasting visuals that literary texts provide. However, this thesis examines how, besides

providing different visuals on screen, the set décor and the visual material serve nearly similar purposes of plot building in the narrative. The key is to realize that set décor functions as a methodological tool in Ray's film to interpret literary texts.

At the same time, these three films, spanning nearly three decades, cover Ray's preoccupation with many independent themes like colonial history, contemporary city life, an ethical approach to corruption, etc. The characters are placed in different settings where they confront either social concerns or internal turmoil, as often derived from the literary texts. In such situations, Ray reconfigures these characters in different colors, often deviating from the intentions of the literary authors. As discussed above, these directorial inputs are due to the re-contextualization of the film narrative in the different time periods or assigning the characters to express the director's ideals. Despite the characters' involvement in different issues across different situations/contexts as described in their literary origin, the thesis explores how Ray reconfigures them by having to hold onto similar principles and ideals in life to sustain and overcome the challenges thrown at them.

The Structure of the Thesis

Introduction

The introduction discusses the diversity of Ray's adapted films and reveals the purpose of the study. It summarizes the trajectory of Ray's scholarship over the decades, including the literature covering the adaptations he filmed. The literature review addresses the research gap and the primary objectives of this research. The introduction also provides a detailed background of the theoretical framework of adaptation studies. Analyzing Ray's perspective on filmmaking and adaptation foregrounds why these films were selected. In summary, the introduction provides a roadmap for the study by detailing the scheme of chapters.

Chapter 1: Rematerializing Adaptation through Cinematic Décor and Character Reconfiguration: Introducing Ray's Approach

Chapter one defines cinematic set décor and provides an overview of the trajectory of set décor studies in film criticism. It investigates the impact of Ray's sketches during the screenplay writing phase on the set decoration for his films. The chapter argues that Ray's inclination towards drawing and sketching during the process of screenplay development is a direct result of his earlier training as an artist in Kala Bhavana at Shantiniketan and, later, his long-time affiliation at the advertising and illustration job at DJ Keymer and Signet Press before he ventured into filmmaking. The chapter further reveals Ray's process of character reconfiguration in adaptation, citing examples from his oeuvre. It situates Ray's methodological approach to cinematic décor in the rematerializing adaptation theory by Kyle Meikle. Additionally, it demonstrates that the fascinating process of transforming characters from literature to film can reflect how the embodied characters on screen materially appeal to the spectator, as articulated in David Evan Richard's embodied theory of adaptation.

Chapter 2: Materializing Rural Décor and Resilient Characters: Adapting Tagore in *The Postmaster* (1961)

The first part of chapter two explores the rural setting of Ray's film *The Postmaster* (1961), adapted from Tagore's eponymous short story. It showcases the creation of the gloomy mise-en-scène on screen that metaphorically depicts the challenges of rural life, specifically designed for the newcomer postmaster in Ulapur. The chapter studies how the set décor, which has a plain architectural design, is layered with rhetorical implications that critique the apparent social distinction between the two primary characters.

The second part of the chapter examines the gradual reconfiguration of characters in the film, revealing imaginative departures from Tagore's

text. The introduction of a madman character introduces a new dimension to Ray's narrative, hinting at an anti-colonial atmosphere. This section references three of Ray's short stories, where central characters embody anti-colonial resistance, contributing to a deeper understanding of the film *The Postmaster.* The chapter explores how the materiality of the madman—dressed in bizarre clothes, with an intimidating appearance, a loud scream, and a protest against the postmaster—manifests as an anti-colonial response on screen. Similarly, unlike Tagore's story, Ratan, in Ray's film, in congruence with the madman, embodies the materiality of resistance on the screen by refusing to offer the postmaster an empathetic departure from Ulapur.

Chapter 3: The Materiality of Contrasting City Décor and Embodying Optimistic Characters on the Screen: *Mahanagar* from Mitra to Ray

Chapter three discusses the film *Mahanagar* (*The Big City*, 1963), adapted from the Bengali short story 'Abataranika'('The Prologue,' 1949) by Narendranath Mitra. Mitra's story is set in the aftermath of the partition of Bengal following the Indian independence in 1947, in which a family migrates from East Bengal (now Bangladesh) to Calcutta. Mitra's text guides Ray in exploring the dynamic features of city décor for the first time in his filmmaking career. The first part of the chapter captures the minute details of the set décor designed for the impoverished middle-class family of Aroti and Subroto. It further explores how the set décor for Aroti's house sits in contrast with the visual elaboration of the rest of the city décor. The contrast in city décor metaphorically weaves in the film narrative.

The second part of the chapter focuses on Ray's reconfiguration of the three primary characters from Mitra's text- Aroti, Subroto, and Priyagopal. It argues how Ray's deep belief in family bonding drives the characters to express a tangible sense of optimism through their actions, a perspective not provided by Mitra's text. Apart from the affirmative reconfiguration of Priyagopal's character, the chapter illustrates how Ray

conveys to Aroti and Subroto his belief that human relationships are a source of strength and optimism. The couple's renewed bond at the film's conclusion redefines their tangible transformation, illustrating a shift in emotions from despair to optimism as depicted on screen.

Chapter 4: Materializing the Dynamics of Interior Décor and the Embodiment of Resilient Characters and Human Unity: Transcultural Adaptation of Ibsen in *Ganashatru*

Drawing from Linda Hutcheon's theory of adaptation, this chapter identifies Ray's adaptation of Henrik Ibsen's play *An Enemy of the People* (1882) into *Ganashatru* as an instance of transcultural adaptation. The chapter delineates the process of transculturation in Ray's film by explaining how Ray appropriated a 19th-century European small town to an imaginary small town in Bengal, Chandipur, in the late 1980s. The first part of the chapter unravels Ray's preoccupation with dynamic interior décor to unveil a new style of filmmaking at the swansong stage of his career. Applying André Bazin's defense of filmed theatre, the chapter establishes that Ray's innovative set up of interior décor compliments an attempt to make *Ganashatru* into a filmed theatre.

The second part of this chapter studies Ray's character reconfiguration process in the transcultural adaptation constitutive of the mythical and symbolic references to naming the characters and places. The chapter concludes by foregrounding the materiality of Dr. Gupta's resilience, which evolves through the vicissitudes of varying emotions and finds its momentary success in celebrating human unity, unlike Ibsen's Dr. Stockmann.

Chapter 5 (Postscript): Interviews with Mr. Sandip Ray and Mr. Ujjal Chakraborty

This chapter, divided into two parts, features interviews with Mr. Sandip Ray, the filmmaker son of Satyajit Ray, and Mr. Ujjal Chakraborty,

a long-time collaborator of Ray and a film critic, teacher, and writer. They discuss Ray's cinema with special attention to set décor and character reconfiguration for the three films under discussion. These interviews were conducted during the fieldwork phase of the research in Kolkata.

Conclusion

The conclusion summarizes and reflects upon the analysis carried out in the main chapters of the thesis. It establishes how the materiality of cinematic décor critically interprets literary text in Ray's films. Ray's approach to character reconfiguration in adaptation involves materializing reconfigured or embodied characters on screen through his specific vision. This process allows for a deeper exploration of character nuances and motivations that may differ from the source material, i.e., the literary texts Ray adapted from. When analyzed through embodied adaptation theory, Ray's reconfigured characters contribute to the film's narrative by actively engaging the audience's emotions. As a result, Ray's adaptations often create a more affirmative and optimistic emotional resonance, which may either be absent or unintended in the original literary works. This transformation enhances the overall impact of the films and encourages viewers to engage with the characters on a deeper level. The conclusion outlines the contributions of the project and suggests potential directions for future research.

Endnotes

[1] The excerpt is from Ray's essay "Should a Film-maker Be Original?" included in Sandip Ray's edited collection *Satyajit Ray on Cinema* (2013). The essay has been cited in the references section of the thesis.

[2] Dudley Andrew's essay "The Well-Worn Muse: Adaptation in Film History and Theory" (1980) has been reprinted on many occasions. In this study, the essay has been cited as "Adaptation" in D. Andrew's *Concepts in Film Theory* (1984), published by Oxford University Press.

[3] Thomas Leitch, in the introductory essay of his edited book *The Oxford Handbook of Adaptation Studies*, mentions three stages of adaptation studies to trace the gradual development of the field by addressing them as adaptation studies 1.0, adaptation studies 2.0, and adaptation studies 3.0.

Chapter 1

Rematerializing Adaptation through Cinematic Décor and Character Reconfiguration: Introducing Ray's Approach

> Only two of the elements of feature film are subject to being photographed: actors and decor. Actors have a narrative analog in character, just as the decor has in fictional space.
>
> Affron and Affron (35)

> The critical insight into an adaptation can be found in the visible material of the screen, particularly in the texture of the cinematic décor.
>
> Richard (47)

1.1 Introduction

The first epigraph quoted in this chapter originates from Charles Affron and Mirella Jona Affron's seminal work *Sets in Motion: Art Direction and Film Narrative* (1995). Their statement seems to reiterate the most important elements of feature films as they appear on the screen— the actors in the form of characters and décor contributing to the fictional space of the narrative on the screen. As already indicated and established, this study also infers these two elements as the crucial elements of Ray's filmmaking craft, as analyzed from Ray's perspective on filmmaking and film adaptations. Thus, examining these elements to study Ray's film reveals his unique treatment of these phenomena, broadly accepted as crucial rudiments of film analysis. In continuation, the second epigraph further relates the concept of décor, as visual material on the screen, to the act of film adaptation. This study actively seeks to understand how the visual elements presented on screen—through décor and the portrayal and reconfiguration of characters—critically assess the adaptation process.

This chapter, thus, reevaluates the concept of cinematic décor and character reconfiguration and how they are generally perceived in Ray's oeuvre of filmography. Furthermore, it defines the idea of cinematic décor or design, mapping the trajectory of this branch of study in the domain of film criticism. It gradually unravels Ray's approach to designing the cinematic décor, including the set décor, beginning with his elementary sketches and drawings during the screenplay development phase. It also attempts to reflect on the set construction process in the studio or on location along with the art director and the crew. Similarly, the chapter explores Ray's perspective on character reconstruction and its purposes, citing examples from Ray's films.

Finally, this chapter explores Kyle Meikle's rematerializing adaptation theory to examine how the analysis of set décor in film adaptations expands this theoretical framework. Focusing on the materiality of décor enables a more nuanced understanding of the adaptation process. At the same time, the project builds upon David Evan Richard's embodied theory of adaptation to decipher how the embodied configuration of characters on screen evolves through creating varied expressions to influence the film narrative and engage with the spectator beyond the limitations of their imagined conceptions in the literary texts.

1.2 Evaluation of Décor Studies in Film Criticism

In his landmark essay "Theatre and Cinema," André Bazin differentiates the theatrical stage from the cinematic medium by emphasizing the crucial function of the décor and editing in both mediums. In Bazin's words, décor refers to the nonhuman elements surrounding the actors, which can heighten the dramatic effect. However, Bazin's cinematic décor concerns the cinematic frames that encompass the part of nature (102-105). Gradually, cinematic décor, also known as cinematic design, may refer to the creation of the screen space in a visual medium like cinema. Over the years and through the evolution of the cinematic medium, the creation of

the cinematic décor or space has been operated primarily by temporary structures, commonly known as a film set, whether using (and then frequently enhancing) real locations or creating entirely artificial, built-in studios, or the gradual emergence of the combination of the physical texture of sets with the use of actual locations and virtual spaces generated through special effects (Mazumdar 57; Bergfelder et al. 11). Thus, the constructed structure of the film set accounts for the visual representation of the cinematic décor as one of the central aspects of mise-en-scène on the screen. Scholars like Tim Bergfelder observe that sets provide a film with its inimitable look, geographical, historical, social, and cultural contexts, associated material details, and the physical framework within which a film's narrative is to proceed (11). Therefore, sets are also crucial in determining a film's genre, and they play a defining role in popular formats as varied as historical drama, science fiction, horror, melodrama, and musicals (11).

Set design is a strenuous working mechanism in filmmaking, which is primarily led by the art director or set designer, who is accompanied by a large labor-intensive workforce constituting a quite sizeable subsection of film crew including stagehands, craftsmen such as plasterers, painters, and sketch artists and architecturally trained supervising designers, etc. (Mazumdar 57; Bergfelder et al. 11). Tim Bergfelder notes that the rise of the set designer or art director as a vital contributor to the production process is inextricably linked in the history of film to the expansion and increasing technological sophistication of studios in Hollywood and elsewhere from the 1920s to the 1930s (12). Charles and Mirella Jona Affron, by closely observing the credit lines from the films, have argued that art directors were also variously called 'builders of sets' or 'designers,' or even, in earlier days, 'technical directors.' They have also noted how, in several other European nations, the art directors were recognized— in France, in general, it is "architect-decorator;" in Germany, "architect"; in the Soviet Union,

"painter-artist;" in Britain, in imitation of the United States, it is "art director" (11-12).

However, the cinematic décor or set design field has largely been neglected and has remained a grey area of academic study. In this regard, Tim Bergfelder and others aver that even more knowledgeable observers have difficulties in naming more than a handful of prominent art directors, perhaps including figures such as Ken Adam, famous for his work on the James Bond films and one of the few art directors whose work has been brought closer to audiences through exhibitions and publications (13). They further observe that in contrast to other professional roles, such as that of the director or the cinematographer, the contribution of the art director has been a relatively under-researched subject in film studies over the years (13). Charles and Mirella Jona Affron argue that art directors have spoken frequently and loudly about the unfairly denied recognition (10). Quoting from Ralph Flint's article "Cinema's Art Directors," which is also subtitled as "Little known to the public, they are, backstage, among the lords of the screen," Charles and Mirella Jona Affron write, "One of the least publicized but most important strategically of the executives in any of the larger Hollywood studios is the art director. He gets little of the glamorous publicity accorded some of the others, but he is responsible for bringing into harmonious accord the various activities that go to make up the production of a motion picture" (10). Although Bergfelder and Affrons are mainly concerned about the art directors from Western countries, the scenario is no way brighter for art directors from the Eastern part, including India.

In their book *Film Architecture and the Transnational Imagination* (2015), Tim Bergfelder and others further note the significant dearth of academic studies on the "analysis of how set design functions within a film narrative, and even fewer studies have been concerned with the impact sets might exert on audiences beyond their subservience to narrative, and beyond their relationship to various forms of stylistic, cultural, or historical

authenticity" (14). In her article titled "Design" (2021), Ranjani Mazumdar comments that "in recent years, however, we have seen an increase in the academic engagement with set design, and while this is still sparse, some interesting and provocative methodological approaches have clearly emerged" (57). Apart from Mazumder, there have barely been any significant studies to address the role of cinematic design in the film narrative, except Carlos Izquierdo Tobias' *Designing the Urban Experience: Art Direction in Contemporary Bombay Cinema* (2016) [Unpublished doctoral dissertation] and Mazumdar's another recent article, "Retro in contemporary Bombay cinema" (2014). As the titles suggest, these studies address several essential aspects of art direction in Indian films, with a major emphasis on Bombay cinema. However, just at the turn of the new millennium, a few considerable attempts have been made to study the set designs.

To trace the genesis of the study of cinematic décor, one must go back to the classical film theory of André Bazin. As mentioned earlier, in his critical essay, "Theatre and Cinema," Bazin differentiates between the two art forms, emphasizing the latter's exposure to cinematic décor, which enhances the visual appeal compared to the theatre stage. However, Bazin's use of the term cinematic décor may appear critical when we only perceive cinematic décor to refer to the film set design. Instead, Bazin's idea of cinematic décor mainly implies cinema's ability to feature the presence of nature and natural settings on-screen. Moreover, in a subsection 'Screen and the Realism of Space' from the same essay, Bazin further avers "cinema is dedicated entirely to the representation if not of natural reality at least of a plausible reality of which the spectator admits the identity with nature as he [she] knows it" (108). Upon analyzing films from the early decades of the 20th century, Bazin establishes his postulation by claiming that Robert Wiene's *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* (*The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, 1919) was a failure in its attempt to experiment with set and design. On the other hand, Bazin approves of Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1921) because of its

predominant use of natural settings, as Bazin believes that it is difficult to imagine a reconstruction of space devoid of all reference to nature (108).

Like Bazin, Siegfried Kracauer reflected on his critical approach to the study of the set design in his seminal book *Theory of Film*: *The Redemption of Physical Reality* (1960). Tim Bergfelder observes that "since Kracauer and Bazin's interventions, set design has continued to sit uneasily among shifting agendas and priorities within film studies (17). Besides this influence, the study of the set design also suffered in the 1970s and 1980s when the psychoanalytic and post-structuralist approaches almost exclusively focused on the primacy of the text as narrative and mainly aimed to decode either dominant or aberrant ideological meanings out of narrational devices employed by a given film (17). These writers also pointed out that from the mid of the 1980s onwards, research on film studies adopted a new approach called 'return to film history' ushering in a new agenda for film research that centered less on text than on context, not on authors but on institutions, not on abstract spectators, but on actual, historically defined, audiences and their specific reading practices. Thus, this approach annihilated the sacrosanct status of texts simply as a decodable product of ideology rather than promoting studying cinema as a cultural and economic institution as well as a social practice (18). Nevertheless, the study of cinematic décor or set design did not receive much impetus from mainstream academic research.

However, the 1990s were very eventful for the study of set design. By the middle of the decade, two influential books, Charles Affron and Mirella Jona Affron's *Sets in Motion: Art Direction and Film Narrative* (1995) and Charles Tashiro's *Pretty Pictures: Production Design and the History Film* (1998), raised fundamental questions about the ways in which design can be conceptualized as an aspect of narrative organization and how in some instances it can transcend this positioning (Bergfelder et al. 18). Charles Affron and Mirella Jona Affron refer to two of the introductory

studies on the aesthetics of the set design by Italian critics and filmmakers—Baldo Bandini and Glauco Viazzi's *Ragionamenti sulla scenografia* [*Considerations on Set Design*] and Alessandro Cappabianca, Michele Mancini, and Umberto Silva's *La costruzione del labirinto* [*The Construction of the Labyrinth*] (33). Among these two books, Cappabianca and his colleagues in their study summarize their argument on the theoretical status of film decor through the metaphor of a chain constituted by four rings. However, a significant limitation in these studies was that the aesthetics of cinematic décor or design were understood by comparing the film design either with the stage design or painting, sculpture, or architecture rather than studying the set design of film on its merit (33).

The relevance of both these studies was that they theorized the study of cinematic design in relation to film narratives. Moreover, the Affrons are interested in examining 'the degree of design intensity applied to the decor' and, in so doing, propose five main analytical categories (Tim Bergfedler 18). Through all five categories, the Affrons argue how a décor subscribes to the script's narrative imperatives and, therefore, establish that the reading of the decor is intended to be inseparable from the reading of the narrative (Affron and Affron 36). Furthermore, evaluating the design intensity of the décor and its relation to the narrative, the Affrons' five categories of the set design stand as— denotation, punctuation, embellishment, artifice, and narrative. The categories that Affrons proposed in their book have "obvious benefits as they ask how décor relates to the narrative, and to what extent décor can act as an independent entity, causing distraction or even operating counter to the dominant narrative trajectory" (Bergfelder et al. 20). Charles Tashiro's *Pretty Pictures: Production Design and the History Film* (1998) has contested the Affrons precisely because of their primary concern to relate sets to narrative. Tashiro argued that objects could 'have meanings of their own exploited by the designer that has nothing to do with the script.' He makes a strong case for studying design as something that exceeds the framed, narrativized image. In this conception, the spectators are the focus

since they bring to the film a wealth of associations that can be related to any object/image that may not necessarily be related to the film narrative (20).

Towards the turn of the century, the scholarship on cinematic design proliferated. Giuliana Bruno's *Atlas of Emotion*: *Journeys in Art, Architecture, and Film* (2002), Juhani Pallasmaa's *The Architecture of the Image: Existential Space in Cinema* (2001), Peter Wollen's *Paris Hollywood: Writings on Film* (2002) came out in quick succession. Drawing from Walter Benjamin's insights into human and physical behavior, all these works argue and develop that "like architecture, film is an art form that can be described as 'tactile' or 'haptic'" (22). The different yet often complementary perspectives of these studies have significantly reenergized the study of film design. They suggest new pathways for historical research, particularly how design can productively be studied in relation to broader theoretical questions (25).

Tim Bergfelder, Sue Harris, Sarah Street's *Film Architecture and the Transnational Imagination: Set Design in 1930s European Cinema* (2007), a highly significant contribution in this field, aimed to emphasize the permeability and mutual influences in design between European film cultures (28). Developing on Charle Tashiro's argument, their book argued, "some approaches to design can encourage 'reading' more than others. There are, therefore, different levels of 'design intention' involving story and character but also, crucially, metaphor and symbolic meaning (21). In the context of studying the set design of Ray's films, 'the metaphor and symbolic meaning' of the film set proves very relevant for understanding the film narrative. Therefore, this short and crucial review of the film set design, as conducted in this chapter, will be critical to understand and interpret the role of the set in the narrative. In the case of a film adaptation, the narrative function of set design can reveal the process of film interpretation from literature to cinema.

1.3 The Process of Cinematic Décor Creation in Ray's Film

The debut film of Ray, *Pather Panchali*, is marked for its lyricism and pictorial details. The mise-en-scène of lyricism and impressive pictorial details is achieved following a unique method of screenplay development. Ray reveals that "there was never a fully developed screenplay of *Pather Panchali*, only a sheaf of notes and sketches… I had already acquired the habit of doing sketches of shots... Subrata, Bansi, and Shanti, my first assistants, got used to the system and found it more expressive than a cold sheet of typewritten text (*My Years with Apu*, 30-54). Thus, the elaborate sketches and drawings of the scenes on paper, later conceived as *Pather Panchali Sketchbook*, cater to creating the pictorial mise-en-scène on the screen.

Figure 1: Pather Panchali sketch of Apu and Durga amidst the kaash groves, The CSSS Calcutta Online Archive

Ray inherited his natural flair for drawing from his father, Sukumar Ray, and grandfather, Upendrakishore Raychawudhury. Both of them were illustrators. Ray's training in art and drawing was institutionalized when he was admitted as a fine arts student at Kala Bhavana, Shantiniketan,[1] in 1940. Satyajit first visited Tagore's university when he was seven (Robinson 38). During this visit, "Manik (the other name of Satyajit Ray) had been nurturing the hope of getting a poem inscribed in a new notebook of his (Robinson 39). Tagore composed an eight-line verse for him emphasizing the value of one's attention "to see the world outside his own door: a single drop of dew upon a stalk of rice – a drop which reflects in its convexity the whole universe around it" (39). Ray commented much later about this excerpt from Tagore, "admitting its significance to Indian art in general and to his own work" (39).

During his time in Shantiniketan, he was specially trained by Binode Bihari Mukherjee and Nandalal Bose (who was respectfully called Matermoshai), two pioneers of Indian art. Ray regarded Mukherjee as the finest Indian painter of the modern period as well as 'a great intellect with a total lack of flamboyance'. The profound, delicate film Ray made about him, *The Inner Eye*, reveals his respect and affection for Mukherjee and his work, who came closest to being Ray's guru[2] (Robinson 51). Similarly, Ray largely benefited from Bose, "who was notably inspired by far Eastern art," who taught Ray that Eastern art 'looks for the essence' reverence for life, for organic growth (52-53). Robinson avers that Bose's dictum stayed with Ray, and it was strikingly reminiscent of *Pather Panchali*: 'Under a limitless sky, everything is born, grows, dies, and is born again. Incessant change from one form to another moves in an evolutionary cycle. If one can assess these transformations, one can be nature's poet or nature's painter (52-53).

At the beginning of April 1943, Ray joined a British-owned advertising agency, D. J. Keymer, as a junior visualizer. Within a few years, he was an art director and continued at Keymer until 1956, when he became a full-time filmmaker after Pather Panchali's success. Around the end of 1943, D. K. Gupta set up a publishing house in both English and Bengali called Signet Press and asked Satyajit to design the books. While at Signet Press, Ray designed many book jackets, of which he remained immensely proud. Among these were poetry anthologies by post-Tagore poets like Bisnu Dey and Jibanananda Das, Jim Corbett's adventure classic *Maneaters of Kumaon*, Jawaharlal Nehru's *Discovery of India*, etc. Ray's name was best known in some circles in Calcutta as a cover designer, even after entering cinema in 1955 (Robinson 58). Ray even started illustrating books during that time. One of the earliest was a book by his aunt Lila Majumdar, who was a successful children's writer in Bengali and an editor of *Sandesh*, a magazine started by Upendrakishore Raychawudhury in 1913 and revised and edited by Satyajit Ray in 1961. During this time, he also illustrated an abridgment for children of the novel *Pather Panchali*. This incident motivated him to make his debut film and have a prolific career in filmmaking for the rest of his life.

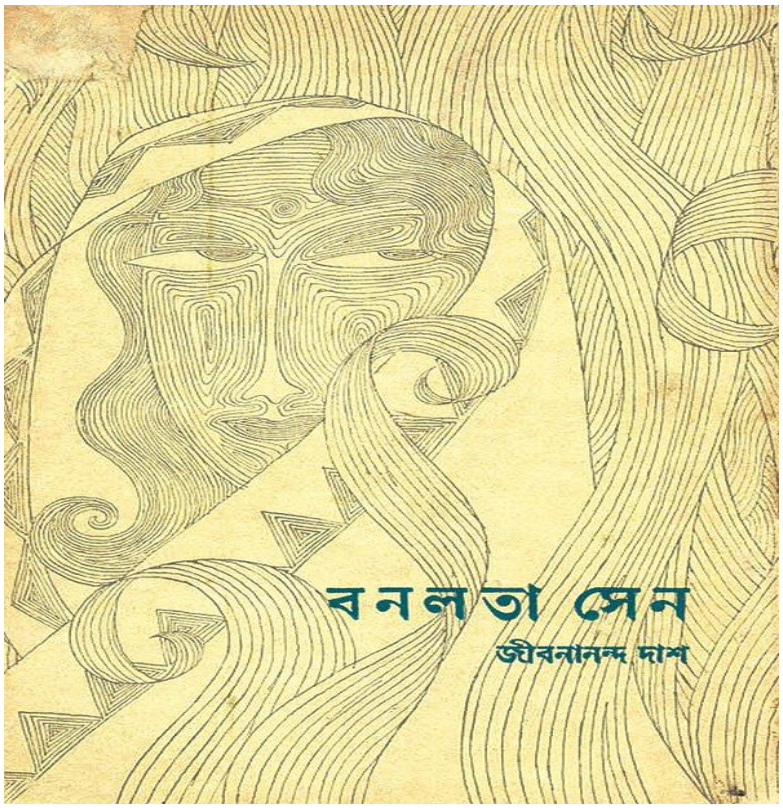

Figure 2: Ray's creation of the book cover design of Jibanananda Das's *Banalata Sen.* The CSSS Calcutta Online Archive

Hence, the genesis of Ray's filmmaking was deeply influenced by his early professional career as an artist in a commercial advertising company and also in book illustration. Apart from his sketches for *Pather Panchali*, Ray continued to make sketches for the costumes, set design, and set props. Therefore, it is quite evident that, as an artist who was so expressive, Ray's sketches for the set design would certainly account for conveying rhetorical and literal meaning into the main cinematic narrative. According to Sandip Ray, Satyajit Ray first used to make the sketches for the set. At the next stage, he would show them to his art director, Banshi Chandragupta. Based on the sketches, the architecture, size, and length measurements were conceived as part of the set construction[3].

1.4 Set Décor: A Collaborative Effort in Ray's Cinema

While the word "décor," originating from André Bazin's work, belongs to the lexicon of traditional film theory, Ray is more comfortable with using the word "designing" (Ray, *Our Films, Their Films* 66). According to Ray, designing is a collaborative effort of the designer and the film director as it involves two aspects: craftsmanship and aesthetics. Thus, in this cooperative venture, the filmmaker contributes to the vision of the cinematic aesthetics of the décor on the screen. As discussed already, for Ray, this process of décor aesthetics germinates from his rudimentary sketches at the time of the screenplay development phase.

Since Ray's debut film, *Pather Panchali*, Banshi Chandragupta has served as Ray's long-term collaborator and art director. Chandragupta's ingenious craftsmanship contributed immensely to enhancing the visual aesthetics of Ray's cinema. As a connoisseur of art and aesthetics, Chandragupta used to make illustrations for book covers and sketches for novels that were serialized in magazines and newspapers to make ends meet in his initial days in Calcutta (Chandragupta, "On Art Direction and Pather Panchali" 87). According to Chandragupta, "art design for a film should involve a great deal of thought, an awareness of the story being filmed, and its location, and its characters" (88). However, he lamented that "most art directors were oblivious to this" (88).

To Chandragupta, art direction and set design are never the same. Set design is more about constructing sets with the same cardboard and jute and using them many times until they outlive their utility. Contrarily, art direction is more associated with vision, thought, and creativity. The first director whom Chandragupta found to be aware of these differences was Satyajit Ray (88). Their friendship started during the establishment of the Calcutta Film Society,[4] and Chandragupta deciphered that "Ray was evolving to be a great film scholar even before making his first film" (88).

Therefore, working with Ray allowed him to experiment and express his creativity as an art director rather than a set designer.

The core essence of Chandragupta's art direction was to "create a believable atmosphere in the art direction"— a realistic effect (89). Working as an assistant for Jean Renoir's film *The River* (1951)[5] taught Chandragupta many things to implement in his artistic endeavor later, e.g. the use of plaster of Paris to create walls, staircases, and ceilings. Chandragupta used the effect of plaster of Paris in art direction in films like *Jalsaghar* and *Devi*. Chandragupta even developed what he called "a technique all my own to depict the effect of rain and sun on a set: softly char the prop and then brush it well with a wire brush" (89). He used this method in setting up the props starting with *Pather Panchali*.

Chandragupta further believed that since each film is an independent creation, the art direction for each should mark its individuality" ("Satyajit Rayer Chabir Shilponirdeshana" 72). Consequently, the set direction for *Charulata* would seem unsuitable for the set direction of *Mahanagar*; and *Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne* (*The Adventures of Goopy and Bagha*, 1969) cannot be shot on the set of *Abhijan* (The *Expedition,* 1962) (72). Although sets are built differently for different films, they should serve the same purpose of catering aptly to the needs of the characters and plot. Chandragupta explains the relevance of the set decoration of *Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne*, a satirical fantasy film, to contemporary society. The palaces of both the rival kings were decorated with distinctive uniqueness. The palace of the King of Halla has an enormity but also features ancient barbarism. Therefore, the architecture comprises lower-story houses, grey walls, and constant darkness. On the other hand, the kingdom of Shundi is a harbinger of peace and prosperity. Thus, the architecture emphasizes the cleanliness, purity, and glow of the place (72-73).

Chandragupta also reinforces the collaborative aspect of the set decoration. The different designs for the set construction for the two

kingdoms have derived from Chandragupta's long discussion with the director Satyajit Ray. He also avers that Ray would only allow the beginning of set construction when he finds the proper connection between the characters and the set. Most of the time, Ray would oversee the set building before the commencement of the shooting. The cameraman and other assistants would accompany him. Chandragupta further avers that he and Ray would prepare a list of props for the set decoration. Props are an essential part of the set decoration, and they add visual aesthetics to the screen. Therefore, Ray would take care of the size of the props and how they will be positioned on the set. More often than not, Ray would make sketches for the prop along with the entire design of the set (73). Moreover, Chandragupta believed that transparent communication and understanding between the film director and the art director can produce good art. The impetus should originate from the film director, who must have a complete grasp of the story being filmed, and the art director can only continue with that (73).

Regarding the function of art design in his films, Ray expresses that design has a direct bearing on the story and derives from it (*Our Films, Their Films* 66). Through designing, there is enough room for details that can enliven a setting. Often, imaginative props can suggest facets of a character not immediately revealed through speech and action (67). So, in Ray's adaptation process, the cinematic décor can transform a literary narrative into visual storytelling. The establishment of décor allows Satyajit Ray to translate the literary narrative into the cinematic medium. In Linda Hutcheon's theoretical stance, this is a process from "telling to showing" (38). The significance of décor in Ray's films lies in its role in constructing the visual narrative, as it is through the diverse elements of cinematic décor that these films come to life.

However, establishing décor in a film is always a condition of economic support and preexisting filmmaking facilities in a particular place.

In order to delineate the limited resources of the prevalent filmmaking conditions of Calcutta and its studio culture, Satyajit Ray stated that it is the bareness of means that forces us to be economical and inventive and prevents us from turning craftsmanship into an end in itself. And there is something about creating beauty in the circumstances of shoddiness and deprivation that is truly exciting (*Our Films, Their Films* 62). Yet, Ray claims, "Yes, I am happy to be working where I am" (62). Therefore, the cinematic décor that Ray creates in his film adaptations owes much to the existing condition of filmmaking in India.

1.5 Reconfiguration of Characters in Film Adaptation

In today's audio-visual media, particularly films, characters are of seminal importance in the narrative. Feeding into the elaboration of many scholars and critics, the definition of character can be manifold. According to Murray Smith, "the term 'character', in its most basic sense, typically denotes a fictional analogue of a human agent, which is a salient element of narrative structure" (Smith 17). In the opinion of Jens Eder, "most frequently, characters tend to be considered as imaginary human beings, by having an intentional (object-related) inner life, perceptions, thoughts, motives, or emotions (Eder 17). Their spectrum, however, also encompasses smart animals (Lassie), singing plants (Audrey II), animated machines (HAL), gods, aliens, monsters, other fantastic creatures, or mere abstract shapes (17). Their mode of existence is, therefore, conceived of in very different ways: some consider them as mere illusions of language, others as signs, mental representations, or abstract objects (17). As a result, "the characters provoke questions concerning their meaning and effects and call for different forms of understanding. Filmmakers discuss their creation, viewers the experiences they evoke, critics their interpretation, cultural theorists and practitioners their causes and consequences" (16).

Among many other approaches to film adaptations from literary sources, the filmmakers often tend to exercise the method of reconfiguring

characters from the source text to the adaptation. According to the *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary*, the verb form 'reconfigure' (of the reconfiguration) means to "make changes to the way that something is arranged to work" (1264). Though the word is commonly used to refer to the technical usage of hardware and software machinery, it is also used in several other general contexts. Here, the reconfiguration of characters would imply the rearrangement of the list of characters from the source text to the film— which means adding or dropping a few characters according to the requirement of the film narrative. However, it could also mean rewriting a character from the source to the adapted text. In rewriting a character from one text to another, the author (filmmaker) usually emphasizes the psychological growth of that character and, more importantly, how the character responds to the recontextualized plot of the adapted text from the source narrative. Furthermore, there can be many more aspects of reconfiguration of characters in the process of literature to film adaptation.

It can also be observed that the characters' psychological changes in the adapted films occur due to a few factors involved in the adaptation process. First of all, a film director can reconfigure the set of characters or the representation of a particular character to express their own vision and ideals through the characters, which is different from the intention of the writer of the source text. However, the characters must react differently to the new ambiance when a literary text is adapted and recontextualized in a different temporal (time-frame) and spatial (socio-cultural) context. The recontextualization of narrative in adaptation can also be understood in both diachronic and synchronic approaches of adaptation for selecting the original texts. In the diachronic approach, the source text generally transcends its time and gets adapted into a different time period. The source text's travel can occur within the same culture or in a cross-cultural setting. Therefore, the recontextualization of the source text happens in both situations.

On the other hand, in the synchronic approaches, there seems to be no distinguishing time gap that can address a cultural shift between the source text and the adapted film. Again, in this approach, the source text can be borrowed from a different culture or within the same culture. However, in this approach, the recontextualization of the source text happens only when it is adapted from a different culture, the type of adaptation that is recognized as transcultural adaptation or cross-cultural adaptation[6]. Having said that, it can be argued that in both these approaches of source text selection, when there is either a shift in temporal (time) or spatial (cultural) setting, or both are involved, the reconfiguration of characters occurs in adaptation. Whenever certain characters are relocated to a different context or situation, it is evident that their psychological reaction must change compared to their response in the previous texts.

In the field of adaptation, several studies have been conducted to explore the different aspects of character reconfigurations in literature and films. Such studies often examine the rebirth of many iconic and immoral characters from literature in diverse media in different temporal and cultural settings. Therefore, the study of character reconfiguration is a common practice in the realm of adaptation studies. However, it is essential to consider whether a filmmaker who consistently reinterprets characters from literary sources in various adaptations establishes a pattern that can help theorize the character reconfiguration process for adapting literary texts.

While cinematic décor works as a way of film adaptation from the literary narrative in Ray's films, he also employs other crucial methods of adaptation in turning literary sources into film narratives. Thus, this thesis recognizes that Satyajit Ray's approach to reconfiguring characters from literary sources into films is one of the significant traits of his film adaptation. Right from the beginning of his filmmaking career, he started adapting literary sources and performing the practice of reconfiguring characters in his film plots. For instance, Satyajit Ray revealed that while

writing the screenplay of *Pather Panchali* (1955), the substance of the screenplay corresponded fairly closely to DK's abridgment, and literally hundreds of characters were dropped from the original book (*My Years with Apu*, 30). It remained essentially the story of the indigent Brahmin priest, Harihar Roy, and his family consisting of his wife Sarbajaya, their daughter Durga and son Apu, and an old bent cousin Indir Thakrun, *Pishi* to the children (31).

Therefore, in his approach to reconfiguring characters, Satyajit Ray adopted the method of dropping characters from the original literary sources and choosing a select group of characters to rebuild his plot in the adapted film. This practice of reconfiguring characters is mainly prominent when Ray adapts a film from a novel. The novel, as a literary form, can accommodate a large number of characters because of its lengthy volume, a more extended plot, and sometimes involving many sub-plots. Hence, Ray consistently performs this practice of dropping characters and concentrating on a crucial set of characters to rebuild his plot on the screen when he turns a novel or longer narrative form into a film. However, among his twenty-seven film adaptations, Ray has used short stories or long short stories not less than eighteen times. In this regard, it can be presumed that Ray's approach to reconfiguring characters in novel-to-film adaptation differs from his attempt at short story-to-film adaptation. Moreover, the short story as a literary form allows minimal space for the plot and permits a limited number of characters.

In a few of his short story adaptations, like Rajshekhar Basu's short stories 'Parash Pathar' or 'Birinchibaba' into films or Rabindranath Tagore's 'Samapti,' Ray has dropped a few minor characters from the narrative. However, in most of Ray's adaptations of short stories, the reconfiguration of characters does not involve dropping characters from literary sources. Instead, Ray adds new characters to the plot when adapting many of his short stories. For instance, Ray's film *The Postmaster* introduces the

character of a madman in adapting Tagore's short story bearing the same name. Again, while adapting his own short story 'Atithi' to the film *Agantuk* (*The Stranger*, 1991), Ray introduces new characters like Prithwish Sen Gupta, the lawyer friend of Sudhindra Bose, whose arrival and actions lead to significant consequences in the plot. Therefore, Ray's approach to the reconfiguration of characters in adaptation involves both the process of addition and reduction of characters as per the requirements of the cinematic plot.

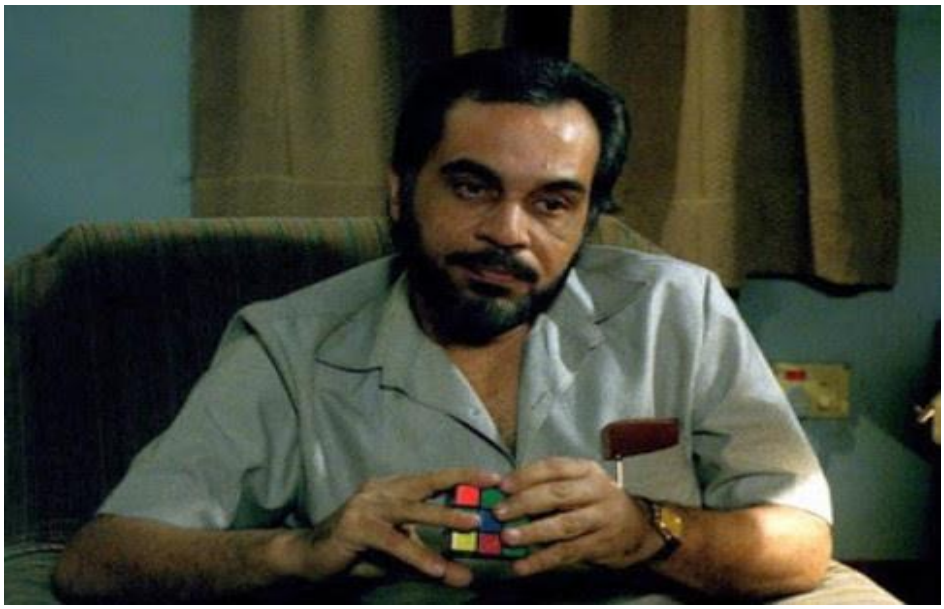

Figure 3: Prithwish Sen Gupta from *Agantuk. Agantuk.* 1991. The Criterion Collection

Nevertheless, in Ray's film adaptations, the reconfiguration of characters does not only convey the mere addition or deletion of a number of characters from literary sources. Instead, the reconfiguration of the characters takes place on the plane of adaptation, where the characters assume new forms and undergo psychological changes not found in the source texts. In an interview with Bert Cardullo, Ray avers that "'psychology' is of capital importance to me. If the characters aren't interesting or aren't growing internally, I am not interested…I prefer a short time span during which the character undergoes a change or transformation

on account of a traumatic experience- this is the 'growth,' the development, the movement. This movement from a certain state of character to another state this complete inner change quite fascinates, I must say" ("Master of Art: An Interview" 183). Consequently, in adapting the literary text, Ray reconfigures characters who go through such changes.

Satyajit Ray's selection of source texts can be read by following both the approaches mentioned above. Ray has adapted source texts addressing diverse spatial (cultural) and temporal sources. For instance, Ray adapted Henrik Ibsen's 19th-century Norwegian play *An Enemy of the People* (1882) into his film *Ganashatru* (1989). Consequently, a great deal of spatial and temporal changes are involved in the adaptation process of *Ganashatru* (1989). Again, Ray has adapted Tagore's 19th-century short stories into films, where the temporal changes mainly occur within the same cultural context. On the other hand, when Ray adapts Mani Sankar Mukherjee's contemporary Bengali novels into films like *Seemabaddha* (1971) and *Jana Aranya* (1975), there are barely any spatio-temporal changes in the adaptation process. Thus, it can be argued that Ray's selection of literary texts draws from diverse spatial and cultural contexts.

Each time the source text transcends the immediate spatial and cultural context, the characters are deemed to react according to the changing context of the adapted film or text. This study focuses on three of Ray's films—*The Postmaster* (1961), *Mahanagar* (1963), and *Ganashatru* (1989)—which draw from source texts that span a variety of temporal and spatial contexts, including contemporary literary sources. Ray adapts Tagore's short story 'The Postmaster,' which is set in 19th-century colonial Bengal rural Bengal, exploring the kinship between a newly arrived postmaster and a village girl who performs chores for the postmaster. As Ray adapts the story into the context of mid-20th century independent India, he follows a rearrangement of the characters, allowing a new character like the madman to feature in the plot. Moreover, the central characters,

particularly Ratan, seem to have achieved marked psychological growth and maturity than she was portrayed in the original text by Tagore. In *Mahanagar*, the next film in the discussion, Ray adapted the contemporary Bengali writer Narendranath Mitra's short story 'Abataranika,'which was contextualized in the immediate aftermath of the Bengal partition of 1947 and how the immigrants from East Pakistan (Now Bangladesh) were gradually flocking into the city and confronting the new norms of life for survival. Ray contextualized the film in the mid-1950s independent India. Although there was only a time gap of nearly half a decade between the source text and the adaptation, Ray's film still made some contextual modifications by inserting the symbolic references of a newly independent nation and its promises to the netizens. Therefore, Ray's rewriting of the characters on the screen looks forward to responding differently in the film's plot than they did in Mitra's story. Additionally, Ray makes an intertextual reference to Mitra's other story to shape the character of Priyagopal, who opposes any compromises to middle-class prejudices. However, unlike Mitra's text, Ray's characters embrace a new lease of optimism resulting from the director's deep faith in humanism and the strength of human relationships.

In the case of the final film in the discussion, *Ganashatru* (1989), Ray goes back to the 19th-century Norwegian play *An Enemy of the People* (1882) by Henrik Ibsen. The reconfiguration of the characters inevitably takes place as Ray recontextualizes the source text into the 1980s socio-cultural context of Bengal, which is again topical in India. However, Ray's film has maintained the alliterative resemblance of the character names from Ibsen's text— thus, Hovstad becomes Haridas, Mr. Billing becomes Bireswar, and Aslakseen becomes Adhir Choudhury. Ray has also dropped a few minor characters who had no place in Ray's rewriting of the plot in a new cultural context. Therefore, the reconfiguration of characters in Ray's *Ganashatru* commences due to the inevitable temporal and spatial changes from the source text. Amidst the religious and political turmoil of an

imaginary small town, Chandipur, Dr. Ashoke Gupta, the recreation of Dr. Thomas Stockmann from Ibsen's text, fights his way towards righteousness. Nevertheless, unlike Ibsen's protagonist, Dr. Gupta in *Ganashatru* is not lost in loneliness and powerlessness. Instead, he gathers courage and strength from the unity and bonding among his fellow humans.

Hence, the reconfiguration of characters is a predominant method in Ray's approach to film adaptation. In all of his film adaptations, Ray takes the liberty to restructure the characters and their roles from the source texts. As developed earlier, when the characters travel from one text to another in the same or different medium, they may follow a different journey in the new text than they had intended in their original text. As we explore the reasons behind the reconfiguration of characters, we find that the different spatial and temporal recontextualization in adapted texts usually invokes such changes. When a film director continually performs this method of character adaptation in their filmography, there may grow a pattern in which the director may attribute his characters with familiar characteristics and motifs. Although different films may have different themes and plots, a director tends to build his characters following specific ideological belief(s).

In these three selected film adaptations, Ray's recreated characters often try to glean optimism and strength from challenging situations. In all three adaptations, similar to their source texts, at the end of the narratives, the central characters are usually thrown into a formidable and unprecedented condition However, in Ray's adaptations, unlike the source texts, the central characters stay strong and overcome challenging situations, displaying optimism and faith. It can be argued that the characters' strength and optimism may originate from the filmmaker's own faith in the power of human bonding and unity. In a broader context, the filmmaker's conviction is that humanism should be the solution to all impending problems in the world. Thus, in these three selected films, the characters mostly find this

human bonding towards the closing of the narrative to eventually emerge as survivors.

1.6 Rematerializing Cinematic Décor and Character Reconfiguration in Adaptation

As indicated in the introduction of this study, the two elements of Ray's strategical methods and tools for adaptation, the cinematic décor and character reconfiguration, are grounded in the rematerializing adaptation theory. Therefore, this study traces the inception of the focus of the field to discuss the materiality on the screen or of the film medium, referring to the discussions of Robert Stam, Sarah Cardwell, Linda Hutcheon, Linda Costanzo Cahir, and Simone Murray. Following their persistent reiteration of the significance of the materiality of screen adaptation, Kyle Meikle, mainly addressing Murray's materializing theory, developed the rematerializing adaptation theory, which focuses on 'the material culture of the adaptive process' (174). The study of the materiality of the screen adaptation is further developed extensively by David Evan Richard with his theoretical proposition 'the embodied theory of adaptation', from which this study further develops how the materiality of the reconfigured characters on screen appeals directly to the materiality of the sensual experience of the spectator's body. Therefore, this section further engages with Meikle and Richard's theoretical inputs to explore the materiality of Ray's adaptation strategies on screen.

The word *material* in adaptation studies has various connotations. Most prominent adaptation scholars have observed that film adapters treat the source text as 'raw material.' George Bluestone writes that "the filmmaker merely treats the novel as raw material and ultimately creates his own unique structure" (*Novels into Films* ix). Brian McFarlane claims that "[n]ovel and film can share the same story, the same 'raw materials.'" (23). Linda Hutcheon also mentions the adapter's use of source text as 'raw material' (7). By claiming the source text as raw material, all these scholars

reiterate the hierarchical debate of the adaptation studies by placing the literary text at the top. Addressing this debate further and adopting *intertextual* and *intermedial* models, Kyle Meikle observes that "films can and do draw from materials, though; intertexts need not be texts at all" (175; italics in the original).

On the other hand, Simone Murray, in her article "Materializing Adaptation Theory" (2008), proposes to rethink adaptation not as an exercise in comparative textual analysis of individual books and their screen versions but as a *material* phenomenon produced by a system of institutional interests and actors…contending that adaptation studies urgently needs to divert its intellectual resources from a questionable project of aesthetic evaluation, and instead begin to understand adaptation sociologically (10). Instead, she refers to the adaptation industry as a fusion of material forces, including production contexts, distribution channels, and reception practices. Indeed, Murray's approach is certainly useful, emphasizing industry, circulation, and the broader cultural landscape sidelines an adaptation's physical materiality and physiological experience (Richard 16).

Departing from Murray's proposal, Meikle's corollary is to advocate for an 'intermaterial approach to adaptation' (175). This emphasis on the intermaterial approach is a result of the film studies' recent 'self-examination concerning the persistence of its object' (175). However, according to D. N. Rodowick, "'film' as a photographic medium is disappearing as every element of cinema production is replaced by digital technologies" (vii). J. Hoberman argues in *Film After Film*, "the digitally manipulable photograph [has] superseded the world as raw material for image-making"(5), which leads Meikle to surmise that "filmmakers no longer - or no longer need to - index the "raw material" of "the world" (175).

Alluding to V.I. Pudovkin, Meikle avers, "every act of filmmaking adapts inanimate materials (celluloid, the dead objects recorded on that

celluloid) into the context of animation." Although by 'dead object,' Pudovkin refers to any recorded object which is shown on the screen to the spectators and which has no significance with respect to the total structure (of the film), Bluestone finds a positive aspect of this 'dead object' in the film. Meikle further develops on Bluestone's contention of V.I. Pudovkin's material distinction as a formal distinction in which Bluestone argues that " a new kind of relationship between animate and inanimate objects springs up, a relationship which becomes the key to plastic thinking; on film, the distinction between man and object is obliterated. Man and object become interchangeable, and the inanimate joins the animate as an actor" (Bluestone qtd. in Meikle 176-177).

From Bluestone's assertion, Meikle develops that an intermaterial model of film adaptation would necessarily involve the process of the inanimate becoming animate… would cast nonhuman actors and elements alongside their human counterparts" (177). Therefore, Meikle argues that Martin Scorsese's film *Hugo* (2011), adapted from Brian Selznick's mixed-media, young adult novel *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* (2007), "makes a startling case in point for the rematerialization of adaptation theory by focusing on that most paramount of plastics: celluloid" (178). In his analysis of Scorsese's film, he argues that Scorsese and screenwriter Logan's projection of the figure of the automaton in the film, a quasi-object *par excellence*, and an object that brings *Hugo*'s material concern to the fore, rematerializes celluloid in the form of an automaton (178). By pointing out the celluloid's material components and characteristics, Meikle recalls the materiality of the film medium— a materiality that always extends beyond the film strip to other quasi-objects (181). Analyzing further into *Hugo*, Meikle explains how Scorsese seeks to show that film in its earliest incarnations (and for much of the twentieth century) was film, was material, was tactile by showing Georges Melies's use of disappearing objects, puppets, pieces of cay in his stop-substitution trick of filmmaking (180). However, "this is combination of 'things' - this assemblage of 'things,' this

collective of humans and nonhumans, this procession of quasi-objects - points the way toward a more material understanding of the adaptive process" (181).

Kyle Meikle's intellectual development of the material understanding of the adaptation process leads this study to explore the materiality of the set décor involved in the filmmaking process. This materiality of the cinematic décor reminds us of the true value of the material things out of which décor is made. The careful use of the phrase cinematic décor is aimed at covering the visual material on the screen, which has its origin in the real location shooting and, most importantly, in the film set décor. As Meikle's study emphasizes the significance of the non-human actors and material things in the process, the question of the materiality of décor also comes to the forefront. This method of studying the characters as well as the material cinematic décor, thereby also gives us a better understanding of the adaptation process from one medium to another, particularly from literature to film. This study further explores the materiality of the décor, including set décor, and its contribution to the narrative building on screen. In the process of adaptation, film as a visual medium, unlike literature, is capable of visual narration in which décor can play a vital role. Therefore, decor can become a critical tool for film adaptation.

David Evan Richard's *Film Phenomenology and Adaptation: Sensuous Elaboration* (2021) is a further advancement along the line of Meikle's rematerializing adaptation theory to study the sensual appeal of the screen adaptation. Drawing from the theories of film phenomenology and adaptation studies, Richard's book aims to further advocate that film adaptations certainly do involve an 'intellectual workout' (12). This exercise of the intellectual workout perceives the sensual contours of an adaptation directly through the sensual capabilities of the (spectator's) body. Screen adaptations appeal to the eyes and ears; so they can also get

under the skin. Screen adaptations can be inspiring, drawing spectators into a narrative world that sensually, intellectually, and imaginatively fulfills them (222). Richard's book develops an 'embodied theory of adaptation' that reinstates the body as the material source of cinematic intelligibility through a 'fleshly dialogue' between body and world, spectator and screen (205).

Hence, Richard's study provided a series of tools for an embodied analysis of screen adaptation that comprehends the 'fleshly dialogue' between source material, film, and spectator's body (213). Therefore, Richard's proposition to bring a renewed awareness both to the materiality of film and the materiality of the body provides an apt methodological approach for this study. Richard's theory becomes most effective when we study the reconfigured characters in the adaptation process. In Ray's films, as this study gradually unveils, the reconfigured characters materialize on the screen to evoke different emotional appeals than their imagined conception in the literary origins. The materiality of the emotional resonance of the reconfigured characters appeals to the spectators. Thus, the spectators perceive new interpretations of characters, different from what they experience when reading the source texts.

1.7 Conclusion

The sole purpose of this chapter is to introduce Ray's methodological approaches to adaptation and how they function in Ray's filmmaking process. Elaborating on Ray's process of décor creation reveals his unique method of making sketches in the screenplay writing phase and then developing them accordingly on the film set. It also shows that the collaborative effort of the art director and the film director achieves the intended result in the set décor construction in Ray's cinema. Drawing from the review of set décor studies, the chapter foregrounds the relevance of the metaphorical and symbolic significance of the cinematic décor. At the same

time, the chapter argues how the set décor can be studied as a rematerializing process of filmmaking in adaptation.

Analyzing Ray's oeuvre, the chapter reveals the main reasons for Ray's process of character reconfiguration in adaptation. All these facets of character reconfiguration, as revealed in this chapter, especially the inner growth of the reconfigured characters, can be further observed in the interpretation of Ray's film in the subsequent chapters. Moreover, the materiality of the reconfigured characters in Ray's films, evoking stronger emotional resonance than their imagined conceptions in the source texts, appeals to the spectators to a great extent.

Endnotes

[1] Kala Bhavana refers to the fine arts faculty of Visva-Bharati University, Shantiniketan, established by Rabindranath Tagore in 1921. Although initially reluctant, Satyajit Ray became a fine arts student at Kala Bhavana. Tagore wanted Ray to study there and therefore, on his mother's insistence, Ray went to Shantiniketan. However, Ray left the University before completing his degree. His training at Kala Bhavana shaped his approach towards the visual arts.

[2] Ray's documentary film *The Inner Eye* (1972) was based on Benode Behari Mukherjee, a blind artist and teacher from Visva Bharati University. The film focuses on the natural gift of Mukherjee as an artist overcoming the challenges of myopic vision. This film is a tribute to the great modern artist who taught Ray fine arts.

[3] This statement of Sandip Ray is from an interview of Sandip Ray conducted by me. The interview features in chapter five of this thesis. More details about Sandip Ray's insight into set design can be found in the interview.

[4] In 1947, with a few friends like Bansi Chandra Gupta, Chidananda Dasgupta, and Harisadhan Dasgupta, Satyajit Ray co-founded Calcutta's first film society. Sergei Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* was the first film they screened. A strong culture of film criticism developed among the members of the society.

[5] The French film director Jean Renoir came to Calcutta for shooting his film *The River* (1951). Chandragupta worked with the unit of Renoir in the filmmaking process. He got a lot of exposure and learned newer techniques of art direction. Satyajit Ray would also visit Renoir's film set and engage in relevant discussions with him.

[6] The concept of transcultural adaptation was propounded by Linda Hutcheon in her seminal book *A Theory of Adaptation* (2013). The idea of cross-cultural adaptation was developed by Robert Stam in his article "Revisionist Adaptation: Transtextuality, Cross-Cultural Dialogism, and Performative Infidelities". Both these works have been cited in the references section of this thesis.

Chapter 2

The Materiality of Rural Décor and Resilient Characters: Adapting Tagore in *The Postmaster* ((1961)[1]

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses Ray's film, *The Postmaster* (1961), adapted from Rabindranath Tagore's short story bearing the same title and written in 1891. *The Postmaster* belongs to the first decade of Ray's filmmaking career when he was primarily preoccupied with making films that based in a rural setting. In adapting Bibhuti Bhusan Bandopadhyay in the Apu trilogy, Ray located all three parts in rural Bengal. However, some parts of *Aparajito* (1956) and *Apur Sansar* (1959) also feature the cities of Benares and Calcutta. Following the Apur trilogy, Ray journeyed to Tagore's adaptations via adapting Provat Kumar Mukhopadhay's short story 'Devi' into an eponymous film in 1960. All these films are set in rural Bengal. As already mentioned, from *Pather Panchali* (1955) to *Abhijan* (1962), Ray made a total of ten films, and based eight of them in the rural setting. Therefore, it is crucial to enquire how rural décor, including set design, contributes to the narrative building in Ray's films based in the rural setting. Similarly, in adapting literary texts revolving around a rural story, it is relevant to analyze how he creates the mise-en-scène of rural atmosphere in his film that interprets the literature anew.

Being a city-bred person, Ray avers: "I discovered rural life while making *Pather Panchali*. I'd been city-born, city-bred, so I didn't know the village firsthand. While hunting locations in rural areas, and after finding the village and spending some time there, I began to understand. Talking to people, reacting to moods, to the landscape, to the sights and sounds- all this helped. But it's not just people who have been brought up in villages who can make films about village life. An outside view is also able to penetrate" ("Master of Art: An Interview" 163). In this manner, Ray adapted

other classic Bengali writers like Rabindranath Tagore and Tarasankar Bandyopadhyay, who captured the true essence of Bengali rural life, which helped Ray present a realistic portrayal of rural life on screen. Therefore, Ray composes a unique cinematic language through the critical elaboration of the cinematic décor to engage with these texts.

The Postmaster was originally conceived as a part of an anthological film titled *Teen Kanya* (*Three Daughters*, 1961)— the other two parts being *Samapti* (*The Conclusion*) and *Monihara* (*The Lost Jewel*). All three films were adapted from the eponymous short stories by Tagore to commemorate the birth centenary of the great poet. Centering around the lead female characters, all three stories cover a wide range of themes: the gradual bonding and separation between the two lead characters, the postmaster and Ratan in *The Postmaster*, the conjugal love story in *Samapti*, and a story of greed and loss molded in a supernatural atmosphere in *Monihara*. Adapting these stories together, Ray wanted to comprehend the myriad themes of Tagore in his writing, followed by two other adaptations, *Charulata* (1964) and *Ghare Baire* (1984).

Among the three films in the *Teen Kanya* anthology, critics and scholars of late have identified *The Postmaster* as one of the landmark contributions in Ray's oeuvre. In his analysis of the film, Andrew Robinson claims that "*The Postmaster* was the best of the three films. In fact, it ranks as one of Ray's best films altogether. It feels faultless in every department of filmmaking. When Ray met Renoir again in 1967, he found that Renoir loved the film too" (128)[2]. Mrinalini Chakraborty, in her essay "Picturing "The Postmaster": Tagore, Ray, and the Making of an Uncanny Modernity" (2012), affirms, "the example of The Postmaster may well be Ray's finest rendition of Tagore" (122). Similarly, in his article "In Defiance of the State: the Nehru Era and Satyajit Ray's Films" (2016), Suman Ghosh claims that "*The Postmaster* is arguably one of Ray's most powerful films in the first decade" (148). Both these essays concerned the strong thematic

message of the film. Chakraborty's essay asserts how Ray's film enters into the discourse of "India's 'harsh and unsettling' postcolonial modernity" (138). Similarly, Ghosh's essay argues how the film presents a bleak vision of rural Bengal, which does not juxtapose with the Nehruvian model of nation-building.

Structured in two sections, the first section of this chapter unravels how the cinematic décor in *The Postmaster*, through its gloomy rural mise-en-scène and the intricacies of set décor, critically engages with Tagore's text in its filmic version in post-independent India. It minutely breaks down the layered cinematic décor in the film, which plays a critical role in the plot building. At the same time, the visual appeal of the rural mise-en-scène reinforces the materiality of the rural décor, including real location shooting and the realistic set décor, constructed in the simplest architectural design with the available material supports and components.

In the second section, the chapter investigates the underlying anticolonial theme Ray's film adopts by reconfiguring the characters from Tagore's original story. As the characters are recreated in the context of the postcolonial independent India, they tend to bring the contemporaneity of everyday rural life. In the process of character reconfiguration, Ray introduces a new character, a madman, further invoking the anticolonial atmosphere. On the other hand, the postmaster is made to receive anticolonial retribution, a theme that has been analyzed from reading three of Ray's selected short stories dealing with Ray's idea of anticolonialism. In Ray's film, Ratan and the madman return the anti-colonial retribution to the postmaster; Ratan goes through exhibiting a materiality of resistance in the film, which was not intended in the imagined creation of Ratna in Tagore's original story.

Section- I

2.2 The Cinematic Rural Décor of Ulapur Village

In *The Postmaster*, the cinematic décor takes shape in two distinct ways. First, the cinematic décor is set to achieve a visual portrayal of the Ulapur village, which is the visual of the exterior outdoor locations. On the other hand, the cinematic décor also captures the intricacies of the interior of the post office and its periphery. Through its minute delineation of the décor in the visual portrayal of exterior scenes of the village and the set-up of the post office, this chapter further explores how décor in Ray's film gradually weaves into the film narrative in its process of adapting Tagore's 19th-century literary narrative.

2.2.1 The Gloomy Mise-en-scène of the Rural Exterior Decor

Writing in the last decade of the 19th century, Tagore described Ulapur as a *gondogram* ("godforsaken village"— from Bhaskar Chattopadhyay's translation of Tagore's 'The Postmaster')[3] (Tagore 28). Therefore, Ulapur, in the 19th century, is seen as nearly isolated from the rest of the province without much development. Once the postmaster was laid down with malaria and had to depend entirely on Ratan's nursing, readers became aware that the village even lacked basic healthcare facilities. The alarming presence of malaria here alludes to the equally deadening presence of malaria in colonial rural Bengal. Not only does Tagore inform the presence of malaria in 'The Postmaster,' but he also lays out a malaria control scheme in his rural reconstruction plan, which was implemented primarily in Sriniketan from 1912 onwards. Under the rural reconstruction program, Dr. Harry Timbres and his wife came from the United States for three years to set up a malaria control program in Sriniketan's villages (Das Gupta 999).

Adapted in the 1960s, Ray's film showed the unchanged condition of village life since the late 19th century when Tagore's story was written.

In the very opening scene of the film, the retiring old postmaster brings to the notice of the new postmaster, Nanda,[4] a photo frame hanging on the post office wall, spreading awareness of malaria in the village. In the photo frame, it is shown that Lord Shiva is offering the quinine pill to the patient, which means that quinine is the ultimate antidote to malaria, as ordained by the god. One of the older villagers calls the village a *pithasthana,* or a holy shrine of malaria. He believes a village resident must face the danger of malaria at least once during their stay in the village (00:29:45). Thus, in Ray's film, Ulapur still bears the marks of the colonial period by carrying forward the burden of malaria.

For filming *The Postmaster*, Ray traveled back to the rural spot, most familiar to him - Boral village, and its surroundings, where *Pather Panchali* (1955) was shot. In the familiar atmosphere of Boral village, Ray and his team made sure to procure things in favor of outdoor shooting (Dhar 231-233). However, in building up the exterior décor of Ulapur village in the film, the camera captures an underprivileged village in the 1960s post-independent India. Although the film allows a minimal scope of the exterior scenes, the cinematic décor of the exterior scene still demonstrates the images of an underdeveloped and remote village. The roads of the village are either narrow, untidy, or damaged. In the beginning of the film, as the retiring old postmaster leaves the village, he is seen walking down the narrow, muddy path, gradually disappearing in the thick bushes and shadows. The postmaster, Nanda, walks cautiously through the untidy and bushy pathway to the pond. Ratan finds it hard to walk through the slippery way carrying a pitcher of water in her hand. The postman is seen running in the tiny, thin walkway amidst the fields and the village pond. The village pond, where Ratan washes her clothes, is partly covered with water hyacinth, which makes the place unfavorable for human usage. Along with this, the postmaster is intimidated by the presence of the snakeskin on the pond's bank.

Apart from the degraded condition of the roads, most of the exterior scenarios of the village, covering the tall trees or the bamboo groves, as revealed through the long shots, are either covered with dark patches or shadowy substances. There is hardly a scene with the sunlight pouring in. It seems that the sky is either cloudy or painted white. In this regard, Sumon Ghosh critically establishes how the film creates the images of underdeveloped Ulapur as "the village in Ray's *The Postmaster* has none of the lyrical elements and visual splendor that are characteristic of images of rural Bengal in Ray's early films, The Apu films, *Jalsaghar*, and (to a limited extent) *Devi*. There are no open skies, no expansive paddy fields, no fruit trees, and blooming lotuses'' (Ghosh 149-150).

Figure 4: Hazy clouds and gloomy mise-en-scène The Postmaster. 1961.

Aniruddha Dhar, in his essay "The *Postmaster*: Chhabi Tairir Golpo," records the experiences of Soumendu Roy, the cinematographer of the film, which reflects on the mechanics of creating a gloomy mise-en-scène for *The Postmaster*. In the words of Roy, Satyajit Ray used to select a particular season of the year so that the natural light of the outdoor shooting location could capture the theme of the story on screen. Ray used to maintain this in all of his films, either in black and white or in color print. Since a note of grief and depression dominates the central underlying theme

of *The Postmaster*, Ray chose the monsoon season for the location shooting for the film. Consequently, all the exterior shots of the film comprise the shadowy, depressing clouds of the monsoon (235). In one particular long shot, when the postman is running towards the village post office through the narrow fields amidst the farming fields, one can see the large dark clouds hovering over the village Ulapur. Even when the postmaster is outside the post office, the visual is mostly gloomy and fuzzy.

In her observation of the gradual growth of adaptation studies, Sarah Cardwell claims that "adaptation theorists seem to have lost sight of the adaptations themselves… in the comparative tradition of studying literature and film" (Adaptation Revisited 68). In doing so, the theorists have ignored the visual aesthetic texture of specific adaptations— the film or television texts (Cardwell 68; Richard 213). Therefore, the visual texture of *The Postmaster* demands analysis to understand how the visual aesthetic of the film text can be used to interpret the literary text in the process of adaptation. The creation of the gloomy screen texture here aptly captures the overall thematic aspect of the film.

2.2.2 Décor as the Rural Constraint for *The Postmaster*

The narrator in Tagore's story provides a very brief description of the postmaster's office by mentioning that it was situated in a dingy eight-pillared shack near the pond, which was covered with algae and water hyacinth and surrounded by jungle (Tagore 28). In his adaptation, Ray changes Tagore's eight-pillar shade to a thatched house of two rooms and adds two small yard spaces on the front and back. Therefore, Ray's elaborated design of a little bigger, shabby, and thatched post office—with clearly demarcated spaces for a small office room, a bedroom for the postmaster, and a small kitchen space in the backyard— adds meaningful cinematic décor to the visualization of the post office and its surrounding location. The set for the post office was constructed in the Boral village. However, a few indoor scenes were also shot in the studio set.

Though Tagore's text does not precisely position the post office in the village, it seems that the post office is situated strangely in the remote corner of Ulapur village in Ray's film. When the camera takes a panoramic view of the periphery of the post office, it can only show shrubs, bananas, and bamboo grooves, which largely surround the post office, separating it from the rest of the village. Therefore, the post office's nearby exterior décor conspicuously communicates the place's extreme remoteness. However, Ray's film introduces a group of older men from the village who visit the office during office hours to engage in conversations. In this case, it is noteworthy to mention that the actors playing the older men hail from Boral village and have already been featured in *Pather Panchali*. Since Ray returned to Boral for filming, these actors from the village were an inevitable choice. The postmaster mostly seems reluctant to participate in their conversation and provides curt replies to their queries without making direct eye contact. Therefore, the presence of the older men does not eradicate the loneliness of the postmaster; instead, the conversation highlights the unease of the postmaster to talk to the "people of a limited vision" who have barely seen the world outside of their village.

Figure 5: The water-logged street of Ulapur The Postmaster. 1961.

The interior décor of the post office is designed to offer a predicament to the newcomer postmaster. The postmaster confesses in the beginning that he has never lived outside the city in such a rural area. The acute dinginess of the interior provides a typical shabby thatched house, which might be a new experience for a person who has just traveled to the village from the city. Even in broad daylight, the interior of the bedroom is not properly lit as a small window is the only source of light for the room, and electricity is not a part of rural life. Therefore, we find a hurricane lantern placed in the window space, which is used to light up the room during the night. Hence, dinginess is a constant feature in the interior of the postmaster's bedroom. The interior walls of the office room and the postmaster's bedroom are barely furnished. The bedroom walls have two small *kulungis*[5]. The postmaster is seen picking up a small oil container from one *kulungi.* However, iron nails are struck in the walls, a common practice in rural Bengal, to hang many household things like bags, etc. Thus, we see umbrellas and one handheld mirror hanging from the nails on the walls. The postmaster hangs his family album on one of the nails on the wall. The postmaster's family album becomes his only asset, which provides him with some companionship and familiarity in this lonely atmosphere. Likewise, he finds a small wooden shelf set up on the wall, which he cleans first and then uses as a bookshelf to keep the books he carries with him.

The postmaster tears the old calendar pages hanging from the wall of the office room and fixes the right page to the date. As a person from the city, the postmaster may find it awkward to find old calendar pages on the wall. However, it could metaphorically suggest how rural life is not up to date and perhaps unaware that it is running behind the rest of the world. The broken chair placed in the front yard of the post office causes even more inconvenience and physical pain to the postmaster. Unaware of its broken status initially, the postmaster sits on it and immediately has a drastic fall.

Although the fall was hilarious for Ratan, it proved painful for the postmaster, who rebukes Ratan for smiling.

2.2.3 The set décor highlighting the social binary

In interpreting Tagore's story, one observes the existing social binaries that Ratan faces as an underprivileged girl in rural Bengal. In Ray's adaptation, Ratan confesses to the postmaster how the previous postmaster used to beat her. In the film's opening scene, the retiring postmaster threatens Ratan that if she does not perform her chores well, the new postmaster, Nanda, will also beat her. When the postmaster notices Ratan's dirty clothes, she informs the postmaster that she is an orphan and nobody else, but she herself cleans her clothes. Ironically, the postmaster expects someone else to wash Ratan's clothes when the latter has to make ends meet by performing the chores of the former. However, along with these minute visual details and the characters' conversation, the film also sheds light on the prominent social binaries between these two main characters by emphasizing the designated décor space designed for them.

As already mentioned, the post office is designed to have two rooms and two yardsticks on both sides of the office. The "Post Office" signboard hangs from the front yard's thatched roof. The poster for malaria awareness is also attached to the front wall. The front yard is marked with a post box tied to a pillar of the post office yards, where people are seen dropping postcards and letters. Leading straight from the front yard to the inside of the door is the main office of the post office, where the postmaster works. It is in the same spot where the older men visit and make conversation with the postmaster. The place is decorated with a sitting chair and a working table, upon which the postmaster's works of stamping on the postcards and receiving letters are shown in a quick montage. The office room has one more door inside, which leads to the postmaster's bedroom. Despite its limited facilities in rural Bengal, the postmaster is provided with a cot on which he rests. The presence of a cot for bed rest may seem very natural at

present. However, in a remote area of Bengal in the mid-20th century, possessing a cot in a village would reflect the privileged status of the person. The film also captures many shots of the postmaster resting on the bed while reading his mother's letter, listening to Ratan's singing, going for convalescence during the fever, etc. Moreover, the camera maps out how the postmaster restricts his movements between the front yard, the office room, and his bedroom only. Here, the front yard décor is metaphorically conceived as a space of privilege.

On the contrary, Ratan is always observed spending most of the time in the backyard of the post office. The area covers an extended yardstick with trees and a little empty space surrounded by a small, feeble bamboo fence. Since there is no separate cooking space, Ratan cooks in one corner of the post office's backyard. In fact, it is in the backyard space where Ratan does all her activities, including cooking, studying, drying her clothes, storing fuel for cooking, etc. In the backyard, too, a door leads to the postmaster's bedroom. As the camera follows Ratan's movement, we notice that Ratan always uses the door on the backyard side to enter into the postmaster's bedroom. In one of the poignant scenes, when the postmaster is down with a fever on a rain-stormy night, Ratan is seen using the door leading to the backyard from the postmaster's room to bring an extra quilt from her bed to warm the postmaster, who was shivering with cold for fever.

Figure 6: Ratan's hovel at the background The Postmaster. 1961.

Adjacent to this backyard, there is a tiny hovel, which is designed to be Ratan's bedroom. This small place has only feeble walls made of bamboo. The roof of the hut is thatched with dry palm trees and banana leaves. The room has a frail fence-like bamboo gate. The height of the gate is so short that even Ratan needs to lean forward to enter the room. The interior of the room is always pitch dark, as captured by shots both from outside and inside the room. As Ratan is hanging wet clothes in the backyard of the post office, we see Ratan's hovel in the background. This is the only occasion when the camera provides a complete view of the outside of Ratan's hovel. The interior of the hovel is never fully shown except when Ratan enters there. In one of the scenes, when Ratan prepares to go to bed, taking leave from the postmaster's chores, the dimly lit oil lamp only partly makes visible the interior of Ratan's cottage. As Ratan spreads a small mat on the floor, she seems to sleep on the floor. Nonetheless, the décor of Ratan's tiny hovel conspicuously establishes her underprivileged condition in society.

By analyzing the distinct differences in the set décor designed for the two main characters in the film, it can be argued that the décor delineates the binary of the social status between them. As a privileged, educated person in the society, the postmaster is naturalized to stay in a better accommodation than Ratan. Although, as a person from the city, the postmaster faces the challenges of rural life, he is still provided with far better conditions than Ratan.

As far as the visual texture of the film is concerned, it reveals that the natural rural setting of the village creates the mise-en-scène. Even the cinematography for the exterior scenes is developed by controlling the natural source of light in the rural area. Most importantly, the set décor displays the use of mud walls, thatched roofs made of hay stock and palm leaves, old wooden doors, bamboo fences, etc. Kyle Meikle mentions the

objects used in the making of Scorsese's film to establish the materiality of the filmmaking process in adaptation (180). Thus, the use of these real material objects in Ray's filmmaking for designing the rural set décor establishes the materiality of the set décor in filmmaking in rural conditions. Most importantly, the real objects in the set décor of the film provide a realistic appeal of the décor to interpret Tagore's rural-centric literary text.

Section- II

2.3 Reconfiguring Stronger and Resilient Characters in the Adaptation of *The Postmaster*

In his adaptation process, Satyajit Ray rewrites the central characters from Tagore's narrative as he contextualizes the film in mid-20th-century postcolonial rural Bengal. The minute study of the cinematic décor assesses the characters' positions in the narrative and their inherent metaphoric connection to the decor, apart from setting the background of the film narrative. Therefore, to decipher the characters' further actions and psychological growth, one needs to research Ray's process of reconfiguring the characters in adaptation. In his adaptation, Ray develops the central characters Ratan and the postmaster beyond the scope of the original text. He even adds a new character, the madman, who contributes crucially to the narrative, participating with the two other central characters. Therefore, one can understand that in adapting Tagore's 19th-century short story, Ray's film expresses its subtle anticolonial undertone primarily because it is contextualized in postcolonial rural reality. Hence, the root of the character reconfiguration in this adaptation can be perceived by analyzing the theme of anticolonialism in the film.

Satyajit Ray's films often express many ideological perspectives concerning the issues of colonialism, socialism, and nationhood. Growing up in a family of writers in colonial Bengal who contributed to the anticolonial literary culture, Ray gradually developed an anticolonial approach in his succeeding films and short stories. He was also deeply

influenced by the anticolonial mores of great Bengali writers like Rabindranath Tagore. One would argue that *Ashani Sanket (Distant Thunder,* 1973*)* could be Ray's first film where he critiqued the colonial intention of creating an artificial famine in Bengal during the Second World War. A few years later, in *Shatranj Ke Khilari* (*The Chess Player*,1977), Ray critiqued the cowardice of the Indian nawabs, whose obsession with the game of chess helped the East India Company to take over Oudh, leading to a gradual spread of colonialism. Finally, Ray's film *Ghare Baire* (*The Home and the World*, 1984) criticized the colonial scheme of dividing Bengal and spreading communal riots.

The films mentioned above, made over two decades, testify that Ray's films engage with the issues of colonialism. However, even before the release of his first film, *Pather Panchali* (*Song of the Little Road*, 1955), Ray's first film script on Tagore's *Ghare Baire* and other unmade films were all based on the broader theme of anticolonialism. Building on the theme of anticolonialism and nationalism, Ray drafted the script of *Ghare Baire* in 1946, and the film was planned to be directed by Harisadhan Dasgupta (1923-1996), who was a wealthy member of the Calcutta Film Society and studied Hollywood cinema in the USA (Robinson 66-67)[6]. However, the project failed because Ray was dissatisfied with the producer's demands to change the script (66-67). Ray authored two additional scripts on Manik Bandyopadhyay's short story 'Bilamson' ('Williamson') and Subodh Ghosh's 'Fossil'. Although these films were never made, both scripts portrayed how the failure of Indian feudalism paved the way for British colonialism in India— a theme he later explored in *Shatranj Ke Khilari* (Sengoopta, "The Fruits of Independence" 5-6). The examples rightly substantiate that Ray was concerned about exploring the theme of anticolonialism even before his filmmaking career started. Therefore, the issues of colonialism and anticolonialism were always a part of his films and short stories.

Mrinalini Chakravorty's article reveals how both Tagore's story and Ray's film are on a continuous anticolonial effort to reverse the existing "colonial polarities or social separations between the village and the city, authorized man of the world and an ignorant and juvenile girl, development and underdevelopment" (130). She added that on the spectrum of postcolonial views, Ray's film also introduces a 'postcolonial hybrid entity' by characterizing a madman that annihilates any existing colonial binaries (133). While Chakravorty's study reveals the colonial binaries and their anticolonial ruptures, the current study conducts a close reading of Ray's three anticolonial short stories 'Neel Atanka' ('The Indigo Horror,' 1968), 'First Class Kamra' ('First-Class Compartment,' 1981) and 'Robertsoner Ruby' ('Robertson's Ruby', 1992) and theorizes that Ray's anticolonial approach primarily developed on two aspects: the traumatic colonial past of the central characters and their present-day anticolonial retribution. Thus, Ray's film *The Postmaster* (1961) could be studied as an early project of Ray's anticolonialism. Tagore's source text, 'The Postmaster' (1891), provides the colonial past to Ray's adaptation in the 1960s. Drawing from the theorization of Ray's anticolonialism, the chapter explores how the central character of Ray's film, the postmaster, revisits the traumatic colonial experience of his engagement in the cruelest scheme of indigo farming, as mentioned in Tagore's story. Therefore, in Ray's film, it seems that the colonial self of the postmaster returns and receives its due retribution by exposing himself to fear and a feeling of grief to repent his involvement in the colonial activity. On the other hand, the madman and Ratan, who provide the postmaster with the due punishment, arise to materialize resistance on the screen.

2.3.1 Ray's Anticolonialism: Reading Ray's Anticolonial Short Stories and their Central Characters

By the year 1961, when Satyajit Ray was already an established filmmaker, he revived the Bengali children's magazine *Sandesh*, which was founded in 1913 by his grandfather Upendrakishore Ray Chowdhury (1863-

1915), a Bengali writer. Under his editorship at *Sandesh*, Ray also became a regular contributor to the journal and started his journey as a short story writer. Two of his most famous fictional characters, Professor Shanku and Feluda, first appeared on the pages of *Sandesh*. Therefore, Ray's short stories also became a medium for his thoughts and ideological expressions. Due to the presence of the theme of anticolonialism in these three selected short stories, this study identifies them as 'anticolonial short stories.' However, an elaborate explanation of these short stories and their inherent anticolonial theme would be necessary at this point.

'Neel Atanka' (1968)

The story fictionalizes how Aniruddha Bose, an office employee from Calcutta, mysteriously metamorphoses into an indigo officer of 1868 Bengal on his journey from Calcutta to Dumka, a place in the present Jharkhand state of India. Due to a sudden technical malfunction in his car on a rainy night, Aniruddha had to spend the night in a dak bunglow[7], previously used as an indigo house, in an unknown area of Birbhum, close to Shantiniketan. During his sleep in the night, Anirudhha suddenly transforms into an Indigo officer from 1868 who reveals how he had tortured the native people, forcing them into indigo cultivation. After confessing his mischievous deed upon the natives and his inability to return to his home country, he shot dead his dog Rex and finally himself. When Anirudhha wakes up from sleep, he is elated to return to his normal self and perplexed to think if anyone would ever believe how an Indigo officer had mysteriously gotten into his body to repent for his mischievous colonial activities.

'First Class Kamra'(1981)

Ray's story fictionalizes how Ranjanbabu, on his journey back to Calcutta from Raipur, experiences the ghost of Major Devenport, a cruel English sahib. Ranjanbabu and Pulakesh visited Raipur from Calcutta

during the puja vacation. However, Ranjanbabu decides to travel back to Calcutta alone since Pulakesh is occupied with his brother at Bhilai, near Raipur. Moreover, Ranjanbabu chooses to travel back to Calcutta alone because, after a long time, he gets an opportunity to journey in the first-class compartment of a train. This first-class compartment was a very comfortable means of train journey during the British era. However, Ranjanbabu grieves that the comfortable first-class compartment is a rare feature in the trains of independent India, and he cannot let go of an opportunity like this. During the train journey, the comfort of the first-class compartment promptly brings Ranjanbabu to sleep, and when he wakes up after a while, he finds a sahib sitting opposite the bench in the dim blue light of the compartment. The English sahib starts drinking whisky and immediately commands Ranjanbabu to jump out of the running train. Sahib calls Ranjanbabu as the 'dirty nigger'. Ranjanbabu fails to believe that a sahib is still calling an Indian nigger in 1972, but Ranjanbabu discovers in a while that the sahib thinks the year is 1932. Ranjanbabu immediately recalls the story of an English Sahib Major Devenport, who once tried to throw an Indian out of a first-class apartment in 1932. Thus, Ranjanbabu apprehends that the ghost of Major Devenport confronts him in the first-class compartment of the Mumbai Mail.

'Robertsoner Ruby' (1992)

In another story, 'Robertsoner Ruby,' one of the famous Feluda sleuth stories, Ray digs deep into the horror of the indigo cultivation and the Indigo officials' torture of the poor Indians. The story narrates that Tom Maxwell and Peter Roberton are on a visit to India to return a ruby to the Indian museum, which Peter's grandfather Patrik Robertson had taken to England during the colonial period. On the other hand, Maxwell is also on a contract with the National Geographic magazine, which bears his travel expenses as he supplies them with his photography during his visit. Maxwell, who always carries a pistol, is also the keeper of the very precious

ruby. Although both of them are very good friends, Peter notices that Tom has changed upon his arrival in India. Tom behaves very rudely to the people he meets, and he believes that India still should have been under colonial rule, given that forty-five years of independence only worsened the growth of the country and increased poverty. Over the events, it is revealed that Tom's great-grandfather Reginald Maxwell was an Indigo officer in Lovepur, in the Birbhum district of colonial Bengal. He was notorious for inflicting inhuman torture on the native indigo farmers, for which he was called *khyakseyal* (a jackal). Tom Maxwell also shares how his great-grandfather Reginald Maxwell once kicked his *pankha*-puller to death as the *pankha*-puller stopped fanning and fell asleep in the middle of the night. Feluda suspects that Reginald Maxwell's cruel nature is still present in Tom Maxwell. In the course of the events, it is also revealed that Hiralal, the *pankha*-puller who was kicked to death, was the great-grandfather of Inspector Choube in Birbhum. Finally, Inspector Choube punishes Tom Maxwell to avenge the death of his great-grandfather.

In these stories, we can see the colonial past and its traumatic memory permeating the present situation. The horror of the colonial past is an unavoidable circumstance in all of them. In all three stories, Ray consciously chooses the setting that has endured the past colonial agony. In such a place or situation, the characters from the colonial past return to the present scenario in mysterious forms. In ‘'Neel Atanka,' the Indigo officer mysteriously appears and confesses his cruel deeds, such as torturing the natives. In ‘Robertson's Ruby,' the barbaric colonial mentality of his great-grandfather Reginald Maxwell returns through the behavior of his grandson Tom Maxwell, who still nurtures a prejudiced opinion on India. Again, the sudden appearance of the ghost of Major Devenport in ‘First Class Compartment' makes the readers aware of his brutal act of trying to throw an Indian from a running train.

However, following the return of the colonial self of the characters in an anticolonial setting, these characters must be prepared to receive their anticolonial retribution as a response to their past deeds. Therefore, the indigo officer in 'Neel Atanka' receives his due anticolonial retribution by expressing his grief for torturing the native people in the scheme of indigo cultivation; however, over the moments, his grief intensifies, and he shoots himself. Tom Maxwell accepts his anticolonial retribution when Inspector Chaube, the grandson of Hiralal, physically assaults him. The readers become aware of Major Devenport's retribution as he receives a fatal blow from the person he was trying to throw from the running train.

Therefore, it can be theorized that the traumatic colonial past often returns in mysterious forms through the characters in places or settings that share their colonial past. The return of the characters, along with their colonial pasts, is meant to facilitate the reception of their anticolonial retribution in different ways, considering the present situation and the nature of the past deed. Thus, the indigo officer expresses his grief and then commits suicide; Tom Maxwell only receives a minor physical punishment from Inspector Chaube, and Major Devenport succumbs to a fatal blow as he tries to throw a person from a running train.

2.3.2 Tagore's Original: Establishing *The Postmaster*'s Connection to Indigo Cultivation and Colonial Past

In the first paragraph of Tagore's story 'The Postmaster', the narrator establishes the story's context in the backdrop of the Indigo cultivation in Bengal. In Ulapur village, according to the narrator, the indigo officer of a nearby *neel kuthi* (indigo house) has established a post office to develop smooth communication between the indigo house and the higher administration. Nandalal, a young person from Calcutta, travels to Ulapur village to serve as the postmaster. While the story only mentions indigo cultivation, one is prompted to revisit the history of the Indigo Revolt in Bengal in the 1860s.

Indigo cultivation was one of the cruelest practices of colonial administration on the poor farmers of India. In the middle of the 19th century, ‘‘indigo became one of the main agricultural products of Bengal, and the province of Bengal became the principal supplier of indigo dye’’ (Bhattacharya 45-46). The poor peasants mainly farmed indigo in their land under the system of *ryoti*, in which the peasants were under contract with the planters on several conditions that favored the planters. Firstly, indigo was an unprofitable crop for the peasants. Secondly, under the *ryoti* system, the planter had the upper hand in the business, depriving the native cultivators of even the return of their farming cost. Therefore, indigo cultivation was ‘‘a forced exercise, and that implies oppression’’ (46). The British indigo planters took refuge in acts of violence and terrorist activities against the poor farmers by locking them up in the go-downs, plundering and kidnapping, burning down their houses, beating them, and sometimes even murdering them (46). Thus, the planters created an air of terror, forcing the farmers to produce indigo dye in the Bengal province. The horror of indigo cultivation has been highlighted in a statement from the testimony of a Magistrate, Edward de Latour, who once told a missionary, ‘not a chest of indigo reached England without being stained with human blood’ (48).

Against this fierce oppression, which went beyond human endurance, the peasants of Bengal gathered and “organized in a massive counterhegemonic struggle” against the indigo planters and the British administration in the 1860s (Chakraborty 130). The notable historian Bhabani Bhattacharya writes that the peasants came to know through some government officials and missionaries that they were not lawfully bound to plant indigo (130). This awareness of the peasants culminated in a new consciousness that gave them the moral courage to fight for their rights. The impact of this awareness of the peasants was so crucial that Bhattacharya remarked that ‘‘the newly gained sense of rights was no more responsible for the indigo revolt of 1860 than the greased cartridges had been for the Mutiny’’ (50-51). Gradually, armed conflict between the British planters

and the peasants began at several locations. On this occasion, the formidable peasant force proved to be a challenging threat to the colonial administration.

In Tagore's story, the existence of the post office functions as a great attachment to the heinous colonial enterprise of indigo cultivation. It is imperative to acknowledge that the historical role of the post office extended beyond mere mail services, as it functioned as an integral institution under the colonial government. So, the post office mainly served the purpose of documentation and monetary transactions among the concerned authorities in the colonial administration. In Tagore's text, the post office and the indigo house are co-existent. The geographical distance between them is not far as the narrator says the postmaster has a chance to talk to the *gomasthas* and other workers in the indigo house, but the postmaster, as a city-bred person, avoids their company. Even Tagore's narrative sometimes seems to blur the differentiation between the indigo house and the post office. Instead, it establishes their mutual dependency as institutions under the colonial administration. Although as a paid employee, the postmaster, by performing his part in the colonial enterprise of indigo farming, seems to serve as an agent of the colonial government whose indigo plantation inflicted poverty and physical torture on the native people. Therefore, the postmaster inadvertently becomes complicit in the colonial scheme of inflicting inhuman physical oppression on the natives.

In a colonial setup, the postmaster, who may be aware of the British government's policy of indigo farming and the plight of the natives, is not guilty of his involvement in this colonial service. Instead, as a city-dweller entitled to enjoy all the privileges of Calcutta city life, the postmaster is a victim of acute loneliness in the village. Therefore, the narrator informs the unfamiliarity of rural life experience makes the postmaster's condition in Ulapur village resemble that of 'a fish out of water' (Tagore 28). In such a condition, the postmaster would get a new lease of life if ''a genie stepped

out of *The Arabian Nights* and chopped off all those trees to build asphalt streets, and if high rises and skyscrapers prevented him from catching a glimpse of even an inch of the skies'' (translation from Tagore's original) (Chattopadhyay 122). To fight against his boredom in this remote village, the postmaster resorted to composing poetry to support his pretension of happiness by expressing his ''joyous bliss about spending his days gazing at the green leaves rustling on the trees and the dark clouds dancing in the skies'' (translation from Tagore's original) (Chattopadhyay 122).

Ratan, the twelve-thirteen-year-old girl, appears to be the postmaster's only companion in his boredom. As an orphan girl, Ratan performs the postmaster's chores to secure her livelihood. The postmaster starts teaching Ratan the Bengali alphabet. However, the postmaster's attempt to teach Ratan is again a colonial exercise to show sympathy and educate the deprived. However, Ratan's misapprehension leads to misery when the postmaster suddenly stops teaching her one day and decides to leave Ulapur village. Ratan's dependency on getting herself educated with the help of the postmaster leaves her colonized, and she perpetually waits for the return of the postmaster.

2.3.3 The Postmaster's Anticolonial Retribution in Ray's Adaptation: The Genesis of the Madman

Ray's adaptation, *The Postmaster,* is contextualized in the 1960s independent India. Unlike Tagore's original, Ray's protagonist, Nanda, the postmaster, is not directly attached to serving the colonial government; the colonial government terminated its governance in the Indian subcontinent in 1947, and India declared itself an independent country. However, the British government gradually stopped indigo farming in India during the first two decades of the 20th century due to the artificial indigo production in Germany. So, Ray's postmaster takes charge of a new role of serving the independent Indian government in its postal services scheme, unlike the postmaster's role in 19th-century colonized India. Here, we must remember

that the post office once served the colonial government, making it one of the colonial establishments. Therefore, the post office's location in the village's remote corner provides a mysterious setting again, which can evoke the colonial past of the characters attached to this setting.

Figure 7: The madman intimidating the postmaster The Postmaster. 1961.

While the remoteness of the post office already provides a setting for the possibility of remembering the colonial past, Ray brings a new character of a madman into the narrative. Throughout the film, it seems that the madman is a constant presence in the surroundings of the post office, adding more to the mysteriousness of the place. However, the sudden eruption of the madman, which was not present in Tagore's text, demands a more critical interpretation. Moreover, madness is a familiar literary device writers and filmmakers use to convey the significance of a social context through the character. In an interview with Andrew Robinson in 1982, Ray is asked about filming *The Postmaster* and including the madman's character. Ray deliberately avoids providing satisfactory answers on the purpose of the character of the madman in the film (145). Nowhere else does he comment on the characterization of the madman.

Ray's silence has also stimulated multiple interpretations from scholars about the possible function of the madman in the film over time. Marie Seton recognizes the madman as 'a deliriously eccentric creation, a shaggy headed, charming, absurd madman'— adding to 'the rural strangeness' (Seton 147). Mrinalini Chakraborty, in her elaborate discussion about the madman, tries to see the madman as a 'postcolonial hybrid entity.' She writes that ''the madman's insanity makes him unable to participate in the elaborate social dance the film articulates between the postmaster and the villagers. His disruptive presence and incoherent rants undermine, for example, the most fundamental binaries that would distinguish the left from the right in oppositional terms'' (Chakravorty 134).

Ray uses the liberty of visual representation to portray a symbol of colonial oppression through the madman. The film also hints that the madness can be a result of physical torture as a form of colonial oppression. In Ray's 'anticolonial short stories,' there is a repeated reference to physical suffering as a form of colonial oppression. In 'Robertsoner Ruby', the indigo officer Reginald Maxwell, who is infamous for punishing the indigo farmers physically, kicks his *pankha*-puller Hiralal to death. In 'Neel Atanka', the ghost of the Indigo officer from 1868 confesses how he tortured the native people. The madman's certain behavioral traits and eccentricities may establish him as a native who served in the British military. Ben Nyce, in his observation of the madman, calls him ''a crazy fellow who marches off like a British soldier'' (66). In his first confrontation with the postmaster, the madman, attired in torn and untidy clothes, sits in the yard of the post office with both his hands and legs imitating a four-legged animal. The sudden appearance of the madman was a shocking sight for the newcomer postmaster. Therefore, he immediately tries to shift his attention from the madman by pretending to read a book, holding it upside down. But the madman draws the postmaster's attention again as he stands up and pretends to be on the war front by holding his fishing rod like a gun and setting it up on a target. Debojyoti Mishra, the noted musician from

Bengal, interprets Ray's effective use of sound in this scene as ''the sound of the wheel of the fishing rod builds up an eerie atmosphere and evokes fear in the postmaster, who thinks of his future days of horror in Ulapur'' (36). Again, the madman sometimes shouts, 'commander,' pretending to be in the battleground. However, as a native soldier in the service of the colonial government, the soldier must have received a lot of physical pain. The physical pain in the colonial era transforms into insanity over time. Due to his insanity, the madman confuses his 'left' and 'right' when he imitates the soldier's march. But his colonial attachment has remained inseparable, as he still roams in the vicinity of the post office.

In this mysterious surrounding of the post office, the presence of the madman works as a catalyst to reinstate the traumatic colonial past of the postmaster. The sight of the madman appears to be unbearable to the postmaster. He notices how Ratan can thwart the madman's delirium scream and force the madman to leave the sight of the postmaster. Ratan even reassures the postmaster by revealing the madman's name, that he is known to the village as Bishu *pagla* (the madman Bishu), and that his presence is harmless. Still, the sight of the madman who once was a victim of colonial oppression reinstates the colonial self of the postmaster as the latter was once a part of the colonial enterprise as well. At this moment, as evident from Ray's 'anticolonial short stories,' the return of central characters' colonial selves to the narrative is mainly to facilitate the receiving of their due anticolonial retribution. Likewise, in Ray's film, the colonial self of the postmaster must receive his due anticolonial retribution by exposing himself to extreme fear at the sight of the madman. The film shows how the postmaster arms himself with his shaving razor and a stick when he listens to the madman's screams in the night. The scream of the madman even puts the postmaster in a frenzied state when he suffers from a fever. Like the anticolonial stories, the film also reverses the power equation between colonial oppressors and the oppressed. Therefore, the postmaster's colonial self cannot assume power and take the upper hand

against the natives in an independent state. Instead, the colonial self of the postmaster receives his dues for his past deeds by coping with the intimidation the madman poses during his stay in Ulapur.

2.3.4 Ratan's Metamorphosis into a Stronger and More Resilient Self

The postmaster's retribution is also due to Ratan, who in Tagore's text has suffered the false promise of education, followed by a complete dejection due to the postmaster's decision to retreat to the city. In Ray's adaptation, Ratan is a strong and stoic character and has journeyed across time from Tagore's text to his. She is an orphan girl in the film also, and the film doesn't share Ratan's past family stories, unlike Tagore's text does, except on one occasion when Ratan says to the postmaster that she washes her clothes because she doesn't have a mother. One must remember that Ray's *The Postmaster* is a part of the anthological film *Teen Kanya* (*Three Daughters*, 1961), which comprises three parts, each concentrating on the journey of three different female characters from different walks of life, such as - preteen, teenage, and womanhood, respectively. Ratan is one of the stronger representations among the three lead women in the other parts of the film. Ratan seems to have gained more maturity in Ray's adaptation than in Tagore's story. This portrayal of the elevated state of women reflects Ray's belief that ''although they're physically not as strong as men, nature gave women qualities which compensate for that fact. They're more honest, more direct, and, by and large, they're stronger characters. The women I like to put in my films are better able to cope with situations than men'' (Ray 126). Although Ray also confesses that the strong women characters of his adapted films generally owe their credit to the original creators or source writers, making a special reference to the strong women characters of Tagore and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, who contributed to the Bengali social history and inspired Ray in creating strong and layered women characters in the (adapted) films (125-126).

With the character of Ratan, Ray has exercised the freedom of creating a strong orphan girl character. Under the mid-20th century gender norms prevalent in India, she was fated to serve the postmaster to make ends meet at the young age of twelve-to-thirteen. According to Andrew Robinson, this side of Ratan informs us of the existing practice of child labor in 1960s India. Furthermore, the character of Ratan can also be taken to represent all of the world's struggling children. Robinson extends the point by hinting at the film Ray always wanted to make about child labor, but the project failed to gain the government's approval (130). And it was Chandana Banerjee's appearance as Ratan that stood out as convincing with "her miraculously natural acting, combined with 'the squirrel-like character of her face;", in the words of Marie Seton, which ''defines her vividly as an individual'' (quoted in Robinson 130).

In Ray's adaptation, Ratan seems to represent more than a mere orphan and child labourer and is instead presented as an independent girl. She endures the physical beating of the retired postmaster, who also threatens her with further punishment in the opening scenes of the film if she does not listen to the new postmaster, Nanda. With the help of a series of mise-en-scenes, the film portrays Ratan performing the postmaster's chores, from washing clothes by the pond to fetching water from the well and cooking food for him. Pointing at his sister Rani in the family album hanging on the post office wall, the postmaster tells Ratan that his sister is educated and can sing, making her different from Ratan. Although unable to read, Ratan immediately challenges this claim and showcases her ability to sing in a melodious voice, which impresses the postmaster, and he decides to teach her the Bengali alphabet. Ratan exhibits her utmost courageous self by chewing a bitter quinine pill, encouraging the postmaster to take his medicine to recover from malaria. The expatriate Nanda in this remote village is helped in his recovery by Ratan, who takes care of him like a family member. The postmaster also recognizes Ratan's help by composing a poem for her:

Ratan, amar ratan// Ratan, my dear Ratan
Tar kajer boro joton// She's very skilled in her chores,
Se amar boner moton// She is like my sister (00:34:00)[8].

Right after his recovery from malaria, the postmaster's abrupt decision to stop teaching Ratan and retreat to the city is again a reiteration of his colonial past. This suggests that the colonial self of the postmaster is still working on him. Perhaps unaware of his actions, he is trying to hurt Ratan again in this situation.

The departure of the postmaster from the village of Ulapur is narrated in a dramatic way. The postmaster justifies the abrupt ending of the bond he shares with Ratan before leaving the village. In Tagore's story, the episode is narrated as such:

> As the boat left the shore, the gentle splash of the waves sounded to him like the sobs of Mother Nature, and he felt a sudden ache in his heart. The sad, gentle face of an insignificant little village girl appeared before him, expressing an absolute grief that filled up the open skies. 'Let me go back, let me bring along that poor little orphan forgotten by the world,' he thought, but the sail had picked up the wind, and the monsoon-fed river was flowing swiftly. The village had been left behind, and he could only see the cremation grounds at the bend of the river, which instilled a new theory in our former postmaster's grieving mind—more such separations, such deaths, were to come in life. What's the use of looking back? (Chattopadhyaya 115-116).

On the other hand, the narrator immediately delineates Ratan's responses to the postmaster in a less sympathetic tone. Moreover, Ratan is prepared to accept the postmaster's decision as an inevitable fate for her:

> There was no room for theories in Ratan's mind, though. All day, she circled the post office shack, weeping bitterly. What if Dada Babu came back for her? It was this thought that kept her tied to the hut and prevented

> her from running away. Oh, the human heart! It keeps hoping against hope. It ignores all logic. It doesn't learn from mistakes (Chattopadhyay 116).

Ray believes that this episode of Ratan's distant longing for the postmaster's return is laden with "Victorian sentimentality" (Ray, Interview with Andrew Robinson 145). Therefore, Ray altered Ratan's final pleading with the postmaster to create a more restrained ending (Robinson 130). In Ray's film, Ratan is not begging and depending on the postmaster to take her to the city. Instead, Ratan is countering the decision of the postmaster.

Ratan's behavior towards the postmaster after his decision to leave the village serves to provoke anticolonial retribution to the postmaster. Thus, from this moment in the film, Ratan is conscious of the postmaster's presence and doesn't want to show him her feelings of loss as she surreptitiously weeps beside the well. However, the colonial self of the postmaster again tries to compensate for the emotional loss of Ratan by giving her a few pence when he meets her on his way back to the city. While the postmaster stretches his hand with the penny, Ratan walks past him without even looking at him, with a pail of water to attend to the succeeding postmaster. Maintaining her silence and overlooking the postmaster's pennies, ''Ratan is shown as a survivor with reserves of quiet strength, able to hurt the postmaster by slighting him, able to ignite in him a glimmer of understanding of how his rejection has hurt her'' (Hemphill 172). While Ratan's sight is getting blurred as she walks away from a surprised Nanda, the camera takes a close-up of his face to show his grief, which might result from a realization of the harm his unthoughtful acts did to Ratan. Ray's effective use of the sound of an esraj in the background makes the scene even more poignant, highlighting the postmaster's grief. At this point in the film, the postmaster is filled with remorse and starts to rethink his decision to leave the village and forsake Ratan, his attentive pupil, but he understands that it is too late to bring things back to the previous order. That is why the intended close-up to capture the grief of the postmaster is particularly meant

for anticolonial retribution induced by the strong counter-reaction of Ratan's behavior. Therefore, as much as the postmaster looks forward to returning to the comfort of the city, he also bears with him the pain he has received from an alternative anticolonial setting.

2.3.5 Madman and Ratan Unity: The Materiality of Resistance

As the madman comes from the same village and often roams around the proximity of the post office, it is evident that Ratan and Madman have grown a sense of familiarity for some time. However, they don't seem to take up any job together in the film until the very last scene. Rather, earlier in the film, Ratan is seen calming down the madman when the latter is intimidating the postmaster. Contrarily, the film's last scene creates an iconic frame as two major forces, the madman and Ratan, who provided the postmaster with an anticolonial blow, gather together on the road during the postmaster's farewell moment. In this particular scene, the postmaster expects to offer Ratan a few pennies when he meets her on the muddy street amidst the bamboo grooves. As Ratan walks past close to the postmaster, she ignores the postmaster deliberately, only to stop a few steps ahead to relieve the weight of the pail of water. She also looks back to check on the reaction of the postmaster, who has just been dined an act of kindness.

Figure 8: Ratan, the postmaster, and the madman together at the end of the film The Postmaster. 1961.

Curiously enough, in this scene, the madman is strangely silent at the sight of the postmaster. Throughout the film, the madman has anchored the anticolonial rage against the postmaster by screaming and shouting at the sight at the very sight of the postmaster. However, the madman's silence in the very last scene may indicate that the madman seems to pass the baton to Ratan, who must exhibit an act of resistance to the postmaster in front of the madman. Therefore, the madman's resistance makes a full circle when Ratan too joins him. As apparent from the central characters of Ray's 'anticolonial short stories,' the postmaster is also destined to suffer the anticolonial retribution in an alternative anticolonial atmosphere. From Ratan's counter-reaction, the postmaster's anticolonial retribution here is a form of grief resulting from the realization that his actions did hurt the young girl.

Ratan's resistance is of paramount importance in this scene. The presence of the madman in the frame does indicate that she is not alone; rather, there is a unified force coupled with the madman, who also ventures into this act of resistance. Borrowing from Evan David Richard's embodied theory of adaptation, it can be argued that the spectator's body, as a source of material, resonates with the embodied characters on the screen and their emoting expressions. In the same vein, Ratan's embodiment of resistance can grasp the attention of the spectators. This is more so because Ray's Ratan has wholly evolved from Tagore's Ratan as the latter seems unforgiving to the postmaster's sudden act of detachment and displaying her despair. In this regard, Ashok Rudra's criticism of Ray's adaptation and the reconfiguration of Ratan's character in the film is crucial. Rudra's allegation is based on Tagore's narration to project Ratan as a woman who would be pining for her loss rather than Ray's portrayal of her as a girl in her early teens. On the other hand, this scathing criticism does make a valid

point that Ratan's resistance resonates with the audiences on a profound level, which could be Ray's purpose of reconfiguring Ray's character.

2.4 The Short Story Adaptation and Its Relation to Character Rewriting

In an interview with Bert Cardullo in 1989, Satyajit Ray expressed his idea on selecting the most suitable form of literature for adapting into a film: ''the best source for an adaptation, however, is not a play and not even a novel, but rather a long short story. For a film of two hours or so, the long short story is the most suitable form'' (Ray "Master of Art: An Interview" 182). That is why Ray made films like *Mahanagar* (*The Big City*, 1963) and *Charulata* (*The Lonely Wife*, 1964), adapted from the long short stories of Narendranath Mitra and Rabindranath Tagore, respectively. He considered Charulata ''to be his most satisfying film, which he would make the same way if he had to do it again'' (Ray, "The Politics of Humanism: An Interview" 125). Interestingly, Ray has returned to the literary sources for adaptations twenty-six times out of his twenty-nine feature films. Therefore, his entire film oeuvre is decorated with film adaptations from different forms of literature, like short stories, novels, and plays.

Therefore, in his inaugural adaptation of Tagore's works, Ray selected three short stories of Tagore and turned them into the three parts of his anthology film, *Teen Kanya* (1961). While all three parts are connected through the stories of three female characters in the lead, the films share the structural integrity of source texts in the adaptation process. Ray had planned to maintain the structural integrity of short stories in the film adaptation as ''he explained to a friend, he had long wanted to try a new kind of format in which short stories would be filmed without interfering with their brevity and distinctive shape. Until *Teen Kanya*, however, he had failed to interest producers in such a project'' (154). Hence, Ray's cinematic rendition of *The Postmaster* extends to merely forty-one minutes, aligning with the brevity of Tagore's original short story, which spans slightly over

five pages (according to the version in *Golpoguchha*, 1946). So, the film's structure was meant to maintain 'the brevity and the distinctive shape' of the original source text. It also allows Ray's script to follow Tagore's theme minutely.

Interestingly, the distinctive shape of Ray's *The Postmaster* as a cinematic text could also be observed in how it keeps up with the structure, thematic brevity, and precision of his 'anticolonial short stories.' Apart from 'Robertsoner Ruby', two other anticolonial short stories have a similar structure. At the beginning of these stories, the lead characters land in a place or situation with a colonial past. After that, the characters from the colonial past make their presence felt in mysterious forms and receive their anticolonial retribution. 'Robertsoner Ruby' is one of Ray's mature stories, and the detective theme of the story, along with its scrupulously detailed narrative, places it within the genre of long short stories. Still, Ray maintains thematic brevity and precision while exploring the anticolonial aspect of 'Robertsoner Ruby'. Therefore, the structure of Ray's film turns out to be crucial, aligning with the precision and brevity of the 'anticolonial short stories,' as both the film and the short stories weave into the narrative of anticolonialism in a similar fashion.

In the theoretical realm of adaptation studies, adaptation theorists Peter Hawkes and John Desmond theorized the process of adapting short stories into films. By conducting case studies of both the source texts and their film adaptations by notable filmmakers— such as *The Killers* (1946) by Robert Siodmak, *The Swimmer* (1968) by Frank Perry, and *Memento* (2001) by Christopher Nolan— Hawkes and Desmond theorized three strategies on how short stories could be expanded into feature films. All three strategies proposed by these two theorists, namely, the concentration strategy, interweaving strategy, and the point-of-departure strategy, were meant to extend the short story into a film following Nolan's idea of 'expansion to feature size' (12). Therefore, they believe that the filmmakers usually use

one or more of these three strategies in adapting the short story into a full-length feature film.

On the other hand, Satyajit Ray, as a filmmaker and sometimes a theorist (as Ray has written and spoken about his technique of film adaptation), deviates significantly from Hawkes and Desmond's theoretical lens of short story adaptation. Instead, in all three parts of *Teen Kanya*, Ray's approach was never to expand a short story to a conventional full length feature film. Rather, his attention was more driven in keeping intact the 'brevity and preciseness' of the short story form while translating it onto the screen. Ray's inclination and fidelity toward the structure of the source text in adaptation may stem from his process of selecting the source text. Ray expresses that he selects a source text that has ''elements that fascinate and strike him as being usable in the film. Those were retained, and then the rest was transformed in the process of writing the screenplay'' (Ray, "A Conversation with Satyajit Ray" 145). By using the phrase 'usable in the film,' Ray highlights the pivotal shift in the medium in the adaptation process, and thereby, changes from the literary source text become inevitable to be transformed into a cinematic medium. Ray's idea also bears resonance with adaptation scholar Julie Sanders's comment: "Adaptation is, however, frequently a specific process involving the transition from one genre to another: novels into film; drama into musical […]'' (Sanders 19). In the recent trends and development of adaptation studies, theorists like Thomas Leitch have shifted from the conventional evaluative models of categorization of adaptation, and they propose a non-evaluative approach to seeing adaptation. That is why Thomas Leitch firmly stated: ''There is no normative model of adaptation'' (Leitch 126), and ''not all adaptations are created equal… because even apparently straightforward adaptations typically make use of many different intertextual strategies'' (Leitch 93).

In the process of adapting a short story and maintaining its brevity and structural resemblance, the process of reconfiguring the characters is

directed towards Ray's concept of the ''criticism of the original'' (Ray 145). 'Criticism of the original' is executed for the purpose of recreation through adaptation. Because "as a process of creation." adaptation theorist Linda Hutcheon avers, "the act of adaptation always involves both (re-) interpretation and then (re-) creation" (8). Needless to say, the character reconfiguration also goes through 'both (re-) interpretation and then (re-) creation' in adaptation. Therefore, in his short story adaptations, the characters in the film mainly share their root in the original text. In the larger part of the film narrative, the character arc adheres to the literary author's vision. Ray's reconfiguration of the characters happens generally at the climax of the film. Consequently, the character of Ratan produces a strong response against the postmaster's injustices and false promises of education, which does not feature in Tagore's original story.

As the film narrative culminates, the reconfigured characters grab the attention of the viewers who are also familiar with the source texts. In a film like *The Postmaster* (1961), which runs for only forty minutes, the character transformation happens for a short time in the film, but it leaves a strong impression on the narrative plot and to the viewers. The viewers also grasp the contemporary social events that character transformation often involves.

2.5 Conclusion

In his film, Ray's interpretation of Tagore originates from his minute understanding of Tagore as a writer and the vicinity he enjoyed with Tagore as a human being. Both of their families shared a close bond. Ray admitted in an interview that Rabindranath Tagore wanted him to study in Shantiniketan, where he spent two years studying fine arts. These two years were crucial and a formative period for the future artist. Thus, Ben Nyce rightly asserts, "it is no exaggeration to say that Tagore was, and is, by far the most important influence on Ray'' (58). That is why, in adapting Tagore's short story, Ray maintains Tagore's theme of humanism in his film. Andrew Robinson, Ray's biographer, states that "in his time, Tagore's

fame far exceeded Ray's... both as man and artist. Today, the picture is more confused. In the future, I believe the world is more likely to watch Ray's films (including his inspired Tagore adaptations) than to read, look at, sing, and perform Tagore's works" (Robinson X). Robinson here seems to address the shift of the time and, along with it, the shifting popularity of visual media over reading literature.

Finally, this chapter concludes that Ray's adaptation of Tagore's story in visual media involves the methodological strategies of creating rural cinematic décor and reconfiguring the resilient characters. Through both these methodological approaches, Ray recreates a 19th-century text in the social context of mid-20th century India. The cinematic rural décor is used to develop a screen texture that can resonate with the overall thematic concern of the film narrative. Moreover, the visual style of cinematic rural décor is used to adapt literary texts mostly in the first decade of his filmmaking. On the other hand, behind reconfiguring resilient characters, Ray clings to his vision of the unity of the characters—the final bonding between Ratan and the madman. These resilient characters also return the postmaster's anticolonial retribution; a concept theorized from the analysis of his short stories.

Endnotes

[1] A part of this chapter, especially section II, has been accepted for publication as an article with the title, "Ray's Anticolonial Approach in Adapting Tagore's Works: A Study into Ray's film *The Postmaster* (1961)," authored by Shyam Sundar Pal and Dr. Ananya Ghoshal, in the *Journal of Adaptation in Film and Performance*.

[2] Satyajit Ray met Jean Renoir when he visited India for shooting his film *The River* (1951). Ray had discussed the idea of making his first film *Pather Panchali* with Renoir who encouraged him profoundly. Ray also later

admitted that meeting with Renoir was an important turning point for developing his own cinematic vision. Therefore, a complement from Renoir about his film would certainly mean a lot to Ray.

[3] All English translated passages of Tagore's Bengali story "The Postmaster" have been taken from Bhaskar Chattopadhyay's translation of Tagore's story. Chattopadhyay's translation features in *14 Stories that Inspired Ray*.

[4] The name of the postmaster in Tagore's story is Nandalal. Ray's protagonist is renamed as Nanda in the film. Both the names have been used here in relation to the explanations of the texts.

[5] The small pigeon-hole-like space carved out of the walls of the mud house, which is used to store necessary daily items.

[6] Satyajit Ray came across with Harisadhan Dasgupta from their mutual interests in cinema and as members of Calcutta Film Society.

[7]A 'dak bungalow' historically referred to a type of rest house or traveler's lodge in India during the British colonial era. These rest houses were established by the British colonial administration along major travel routes for government officials, travelers, and postal workers. They provided accommodation and basic facilities for travelers, especially those on official or long journeys.

[8] The English translation of this poem has been carried out by me. The original time of the film has been cited in-text. Anirudhha Dhar in his article, "The "Postmaster: Chhabi Tairir Golpo," has made an interesting

observation that the original Bengali poem by the postmaster does not contain any Bengali compound letters, because Ratan could not read Bengali compound letters. Hence, a poem for Ratan should not contain the same. Dhar's article has been cited in the references section of this thesis.

Chapter 3

The Materiality of Contrasting City Décor and Embodying Optimistic Characters on the Screen: *Mahanagar* from Mitra to Ray

> I am interested in human beings and in relationships between them. I am observant of human beings and their relations. This is a quality I have developed over the years. I am also interested in psychology.
>
> Ray[1]

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the thesis investigates the intricacies of city décor and the reconfiguration of optimistic characters in Ray's film adaptation. The chronological shift from rural to city décor is a visible feature in Ray's filmography; thus, the shift in the succeeding chapters from rural to urbanscape seems to have been influenced by the chronological structure of the filmography. Therefore, this chapter selects Ray's film *Mahanagar* (*The Big City*, 1963), an adaptation of Narendranath Mitra's 'Abataranika' ('The Prologue,' 1949), which "is Ray's first examination of more or less contemporary Calcutta, concentrating on the struggles of the poorer section of the middle class – a very particular world, whose characters are nonetheless made to feel intimately known to viewers far removed from such struggles" (Robinson 149). It is true that *Aparajito* (1956), *Parash Pathar* (1958), and *Apur Sansar* (1959) featured parts of Calcutta city in the late 1930s or early 1940s, but the dominant characteristics of the city have never such a crucial role as in *Mahanagar*.

As a prolific writer of Bengali literature, Narendranath Mitra, who started his writing career in the late 1930s, has established himself as a prominent and distinguished exponent amidst the presence of great literary masters like Bibhuti Bhushan Bandopadhyay, Manik Bandopadhyay, or the popular literary groups of that period like the *Kallol* writers[2]. The significant

trait of his literature was chronicling the middle-class life of Calcutta city. He was an immigrant from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), and he used to detail in many of his well-known stories the plight of the newcomers from East Pakistan settling in the city of Calcutta. In a significant portion of his short stories, Mitra has drawn the picture of the lower middle-class family in the city, who struggle to make ends meet with one earning member of a meager salary in the family. The families in his stories mostly include one breadwinner with a meager salary and a substantial number of five or six more members depending on that salary. Written in the late 1940s, two years after India's independence, Mitra's short story 'Abataranika' narrates the story of a lower-middle-class family that migrated to Calcutta city and battled an economic crisis. As the only earner, Subroto[3] struggles to provide for a family of nine members. This financial juncture creates the opportunity for Aroti, the young married woman in the household, to look forward to earning outside the boundary of the household. However, Priyagopal, her father-in-law, never approves of Aroti's job as he believes her action defies the so-called principles of middle-class life.

An avid reader of Mitra's stories, Ray expresses that "he was struck by the acute observation of the middle-class life when he first encountered Mitra's stories some fifteen years ago (the early 1950s)" (Mitra, *Mahanagar* v). Ray complimented Mitra's "high degree of sensitivity and observation could achieve these minute details of middle-class life" (v). Therefore, Ray wanted to adapt Mitra's 'Abataranika' right after the release of *Pather Panchali*. However, the plan couldn't succeed because "he failed to find a backer for it, and added to that, he believed the time was also not ripe for a film that questioned the middle-class values" (v). Finally, Ray adapted Mitra's story in his full-length feature film *Mahanagar*. Although some inevitable cinematic medium-specific modification occurred in Ray's cinematic version, most of the material was retained, and all of the inspiration came from the original story (v). The process of adaptation between Mitra and Ray becomes dialogic in a way that Mitra has rewritten

his short story "Abataranika" into a novella called *Mahanagar* (1965) based on Ray's film.

Structured into two sections, the first section of the chapter explores the amazing mise-en-scene of contrasting city décor in the film. It explores how a tiny architectural design of a set is constructed to capture the financially challenging condition of a lower-middle family. The materiality of a middle-class set décor is achieved through the detailed delineation of the set design and props arrangement of a typical middle-class household. On the other hand, the larger city décor shown in the film contrasts with the set décor of the middle-class family to rhetorically indicate the dynamic possibilities of city life. In the next section, the chapter focuses on Ray's reconfiguration of characters in adapting Mitra's short story and how the characters, based on Ray's vision of faith in relationships, develop an optimistic prospect of life.

Section I

3.2 The Materiality of Set Décor for Middle-class Household

Narendranath Mitra, who is a well-known writer for capturing everyday middle-class city life, generally takes recourse to his poignant storytelling and the struggles of his characters to delineate the economic condition of the family. Likewise, in 'Abataranika,' Mitra's narrative focuses on the financial plight of Aroti's family and her fight to rescue it against all odds of prejudices. The powerful narrative from the character's point of view becomes so engaging that the readers may often tend to overlook the minimum visual imagery of the narrative in detailing the characters' houses and other material substances. Thus, Mitra's story does not visualize the material substances of Aroti's house, apart from giving a fleeting reference to the fact that the house is situated in Kalighat. Quite contrarily, in Ray's adaptation, the minute portrayal of visual materials holds crucial importance in the narrative. Therefore, the film director Ray's

aesthetic vision and the art director Banshi Chandragupta's craftsmanship from "painstaking research contributed to the conviction of Ray's recreation of lower-middle-class life" (Robinson 151).

In Ray's film, Aroti and Subroto's house is located in a crowded locality of the Kalighat area of the metropolitan city of Calcutta. As the camera captures at the beginning of the film, when Subroto walks through the lane to his house, the locality of the Kalighat is a crowded part of the city. The narrow lane is occupied by tiny shops, vendors, people's gatherings, and innumerable children playing and shouting in the middle of the street. Thus, Subroto seems to find his way in the crowded lane to reach his house. Moreover, as the camera reveals, the houses on both sides of the lanes seem to be old and dilapidated buildings. This background view was created by using a photograph of Calcutta houses enlarged to the size of a large screen, and it was set at an angle" (Seton 236). In this manner, delineating the cinematic décor of the lane, the film sets up the context that Subroto's house is situated in an old part of the city, which the lower middle-class people in the town mostly populate.

Subroto's house is also situated in this congested lane of houses. The house is connected to the main lane with another tiny alley whose one end separates the main road by a door, and the other end stretches to the central yard of the house. The house, which looks like an old concrete setup, seems to be a tiny property. It is closely surrounded by other houses and walls from all directions. It seems there is hardly any empty space in the periphery of the house. Therefore, the entire film has hardly any long shots or overhead shots of the house. The lack of space around the house prevents the camera from making spontaneous movements. The house comprises two small bedrooms and a separate drawing room, a space for Priyagopal, Subroto's father, where he spends most of his time.

The entire structure of the house is a built-in set by the mastery of Banshi Chandragupta. After reaching the set and observing it, Ray

expressed joy, praising Chandragupta's work. He applauded it as a "lovely set— three rooms, courtyard, veranda. The smallest room ever built!" (Seton 236). As informed by Robinson, "all the rooms in the set had four walls, none of them removable on wheels to reinforce the claustrophobic atmosphere of the family house" (151). This innovative approach to having four walls was specially curated to highlight the lack of space[4].

The diminutiveness of the house is a visible feature. The two bedrooms of the house share a wall between them and a narrow rectangular yard on the front side of the house. The wall between the rooms shares a door through which all characters can move from one room to another. All the main doors of the rooms lead to the front yard of the house. There are also thin curtains hanging from each door. All these doors have been designed in the house to indicate the free and continuous flow of the characters. Therefore, within the first eight minutes of the film, the film introduces all the major characters. The one main reason is that even when the characters are not in focus, they eventually feature in the frame when the other characters are in the frame. Thus, Pintu, Subroto's little son, often comes into the frame even when he is not focused or contributing to the scene. Similarly, as the camera focuses on Aroti and Subroto when they discuss Aroti's application for a job, it is seen that Bani is also captured by the camera, who is standing in the other room. Thus, in this limited space, all the characters keep changing space as they engage in their daily activities.

As all the characters are introduced, it is observable that these characters keep changing their location frequently. Bani, Subroto's sister, is always moving between the two rooms. She even seems to be very dear to Aroti. In her very first appearance, she is seen studying in Aroti and Subroto's bedroom. Once Subroto returns from his office and enters his bedroom, Bani immediately seems to empty the space and moves to the other room. It is noticeable that when Bani changes rooms, she mainly uses

the door in the wall between the two rooms. Aroti's son, Pintu, often moves among the rooms. Sarojini, Subroto's mother, often shares space between the rooms. Therefore, it is observed that these movements of the characters intrude on Aroti and Subroto's conjugal space. Bani is the one who often intrudes on this conjugal space of the married couple. She is seen suddenly barging into Subroto's bedroom when the couple want to hide from the rest of the family that they are searching for a job in the newspaper. As a result, Aroti and Subroto need to feign that they are looking after the advertisement for the new movie release. In some other moments, Bani restrains herself from entering their bedroom, respecting the conjugal space of Subroto and Aroti. Instead, she fixes the curtain to allow them privacy.

Figure 9: Small set rooms for Mazumdar family Mahanagar 1963. The Criterion Collection

Even within the tiny spaces, the rooms are stuffed with a lot of household pieces of stuff. With the presence of the cot, there is very little empty ground left on the floor. Moreover, all the rooms of the house accommodate a lot of household items that are used daily. The atmosphere of such a house was enhanced by the selection and use of the properties—saris hung over as curtains, a collection of calendars on the walls, Hindu religious iconographies of Lord Shiva and Parvati, etc. (Seton 304). The

rooms have small shelves or almirahs attached to the walls where a lot of stationery and other items are stored tightly. Similarly, in the makeshift kitchen space of the yardstick, the characters collide unknowingly with a cupboard used for storing cooking stuff and are placed on the ground, occupying a good space and not allowing the characters to move freely there. Clothes are hanging all over the place. In one scene, it is seen that while Aroti and Subroto are in conversation, clothes are dropping from an overstuffed wardrobe. While these are the signs of a typical lower-middle-class family house, they also indicate the lack of space in the rooms. Therefore, the décor is deliberately designed to indicate the lack of space in the house or to suggest the smallness of the house for six members.

Even in the limited space, Seton observes, the set décor "allowed for a considerable range of visual effects and imaginative lighting" (236). Due to their limited space, the rooms sometimes seem dimly lit. Half of Priyagopal's room always looks partially dark, even during the daytime, which indicates that the congested interior space does not allow the light to travel to all corners of the house. The walls of the room look pitch black. In one scene, when Priyagopal convinces Sarojini to lend him money, both characters move into the room and look like shadowy silhouettes moving in the room. Due to this lack of light, Priyagopal, who has grown aged, strains his eyes to read and gradually weakens his eyesight. Therefore, a table lamp is placed to the advantage of Priyagopal's reading. During the evening scenes, the two other bedrooms also suffer from a lack of proper lighting. Therefore, the walls, which are heavily decorated with household stuff, and the entire space of the rooms are barely comprehensible to the viewer's eye sometimes.

Figure 10: The use of imaginative light in the interior decor Maganagar. 1963. The Criterion Collection

The effect of sound plays a significant role in reflecting on the décor of the house. This general appearance of cramped and sometimes forced intimacy is supplemented with music and other noises from the neighbors. There is a neat list in Ray's shooting notebook of the songs and programs the family would be overhearing (Robinson 151). At the beginning of the film, when Aroti enters Priyagopal's room to serve his medicine, one can listen to the sound of temple bells and an evening *arati* (prayer) being performed at the nearby temple. The evening news played on a radio travel to Aroti and Subroto's bedroom multiple times. The sound of the radio, which either breaks the news of the beginning of the Asian Games in Delhi in 1953 or the start of a war in Russia, seems so clear and loud that it attracts Subrotro's attention. Therefore, he comments that living in this *para* (part of the city) is advantageous as one does not need to buy their own radio. However, as these sounds intrude on their house, it is evident that these houses are relatively smaller in size and located very close to one another. Therefore, the house's location in this area is cinematic décor to indicate that it is a congested part of the city, which the lower-middle-class people in the town mainly inhabit.

3.2.1 Aroti's Job: A Journey to the Exterior City Décor

Since Aroti starts her job as a salesgirl in the Mukherjee and Mukherjee Farm and begins to travel to the city, we immediately find a different projection of city décor than was displayed when capturing her house. As Aroti is out to meet her clients and sell the auto-knit machines, she finds the houses of affluent people in the city. The projection of the city décor of the wealthy houses starkly differs from the projection we have seen at the beginning of the film to delineate the house of Aroti. As Aroti stands alone in the center of a road on her way to meet clients, one can see an empty road surrounded by a rich alignment of houses on both sides of the street. This picture of Aroti on an empty road starkly contrasts with the first scene when Subroto walks home on a crowded street. Adding to that, the cinematic décor shows that the houses look highly developed, and empty spaces are maintained between them, unlike the houses in Subroto's locality.

Furthermore, as Aroti enters a client's house, she is surprised to observe the décor of the house. As she walks through the long aisle from the main gate to the drawing room, Aroti is astonished, watching the grandeur decoration of the house. Unlike Aroti's own house, there is no lack of space in her client's house. The drawing room where two children are found playing encompasses enormous space. Even from the drawing room, one can see through the window the ample empty garden space of the house. Therefore, the house is not congested by the presence of the other houses in the area. The sound of the light music fills the drawing room space. The vast drawing room is decorated with large empty sofas where Aroti comforts herself. The immaculately painted and bright walls also accommodate the large canvases of painting, which add aesthetic value to the space.

In this manner, the film gradually introduces Aroti to the exposure of the lavish city décor, which is starkly different from her house. This

metaphorically implies that Aroti's job offers her the opportunity to experience a more developed part of the city. Again, metaphorically, the city décor is also related to Aroti's improvement from a married woman of a middle-class family to an employee at a decent farm. As she approaches these people, she feels dignified and professional. Therefore, her exposure to the city décor is proportional to the growth of her character as a salesgirl and an earning member of the family.

The film has taken care of the office décor by allowing a separate space for the saleswoman. Thus, this separate space in the décor suggests that this special place has been dedicated to the women. The Mukherjee and Mukherjee Farm on Canning Street is an office that sells auto-knit machines and similar items. The office's interior décor is very attractive and very different from Subroto's house. Mr. Himanshu Mukherjee's office room is very decorative, along with some advertising posters. Even Subroto praises the interior of Mr. Mukherjee's office. Aroti compliments Mr. Mukherjee for not liking shabbiness at all. The office was built in a studio set. Ray injected the idea that the set should have a photographic background, one overlooking the incredible sight of the Esplanade" (Seton 238).

Moreover, it is an organization that is officiated chiefly by male workers, except for a small group of female workers. Therefore, allowing a different space for the women seems very necessary. Therefore, a small waiting room is dedicated to all the female workers. At one point, one sees that all the female workers sit together on the sofas in the waiting room, gossiping and making fun of their experience of meeting their clients when they travel from one house to another. Again, this is the space where Edith informs her other co-workers how to fight for the commission from their boss, Mr. Mukherjee. Edith explains to the co-workers that she convinced Mr. Mukherjee to offer them a five percent commission on their first five machine sales.

However, the décor of the washroom space turns out to be a place with metaphorical implications. Though the room has hangers, a large mirror, and substantial empty space, it is not the usual décor of a washroom. Instead, the washroom decor becomes a secret space to allow Aroti and Edith to know each other more and share their bond even closer. When Aroti receives her first month's salary in the office, she immediately goes inside the washroom. As she smells the notes removed from the salary envelope, she stands in front of the mirror and watches herself. The décor of the glass mirror is designed here for Aroti to witness a renewed version of herself—a woman who can now earn and support her family in difficult times. Therefore, the décor of the mirror serves to uphold Aroti's growth.

Figure 11: Aroti in front of the washroom mirror after receiving her salary Mahanagar. 1963. The Criterion Collection

The washroom space and mirror witness another massive change in Aroti. As Edith is displeased with the crumpled and dirty notes she received in her envelope, Aroti agrees to exchange her new notes with Edith. Therefore, Edith gifts Aroti a new lipstick box to reward her gesture of kindness. Initially hesitant to receive it from Edith, Aroti first closes the

washroom door to ensure the privacy of the space before receiving the lipstick. Thus, the separate washroom space is crucial as it observes Aroti's minute growth. However, as she is unaware of how to wear it, Edith helps to wear it on her lips. Edith alludes to the Indian tradition of putting red color on lips and cheeks. After Edith puts the lipstick on Aroti's lips, she again moves in front of the mirror.

Edith strengthens her bond with Aroti by being friendly with her and helping Aroti grow as an employee. It is also seen that Aroti fills in for Edith at work by performing Edith's assignment herself. Their bond as co-workers grows rapidly, and they become friends very soon. Edith's job as a salesgirl suggests that she has to fight against the economic condition of her family, just like Aroti. The cinematic décor of Edith's house also reveals that Edith's family condition is very similar to Aroti's. Neither Mitra's text nor Ray's film mentions which part of the city Edith's house is situated in. As a matter of fact, Mitra's short story does not narrate anything about Edith's house and Aroti's visit there. So, Aroti's visit to Edith's house is a new addition to Ray's adaptation. The film closely focuses on the décor of Edith's house to demonstrate that Edith belongs to the same economic class in the city as Aroti. Aroti, unaware of Edith's illness, pays a visit to Edith's house to give her the month's salary and requests her to submit her sales report to the office. Aroti finds the latter laden with fever when she enters Edith's house.

3.2.2 Décor as a Metaphor for Friendship

One may find the interior décor of Edith's and Aroti's houses similar. Edith's house is a very small property with a tiny hall space after the main door and running into a small bedroom and an attached kitchen. Since only two people, Edith and her mother, live in the house, there are no curtains on the doors, unlike Aroti's house. However, since there is very limited space inside the house, the essential household items are clogged together in the entire house. Small stools and tables occupy the floor space,

interrupting the characters' free movements within the house's limited space. The albums, posters, photos, and tiny-shaped shelves are hanging from all parts of the walls. The hanging clothes seem to occupy a lot of empty spaces in the house. The interior walls have been worn out, and the dyeing has faded. Thus, added to the darkness inside, the building looks like an old one. As Aroti and Edith discuss their office work, an incessant flow of loud music enters Edith's house. By allowing the loud music to enter their house, the film suggests that the houses are situated very close to one another. Therefore, the camera does not capture long shots or broad views of Edith's house.

The main purpose of constructing similar house décor for Aroti and Edith is that Ray wanted to show "how similar the conditions of living are for both the girls which bring them closer" (Seton 237). In order to search for an actor to play the role of Edith on screen, Ray took the help of K.C. Sen, a familiar person of Ray, who searched for Vickey Redwood, a professional Anglo-Indian singer in restaurants and nightclubs (237). Moreover, "Sen conducted Satyajit to some Anglo-Indian homes for the purpose of accuracy in constructing the set for Edith's home" (237). Minutely observing the Anglo-Indian homes, "Ray declared to his unit that the area where Sen and he went was no better off economically than the one where Mazumdar family live— Bhowanipore" (237)".

Figure 12: Edith's house decor, identical with Aroti's house Mahanagar. 1963. The Criterion Collection

By establishing the décor of Edith's house, which is similar to that of Aroti's, the film demonstrates that both of them come from the same economic strata. Having said that, it is also true that they both fight to elevate the financial conditions of their respective families. In such a situation, evidently, they stand by each other in their office activities and beyond. While Aroti fills in Edith's space in the latter's absence, Edith helps Aroti to metamorphose from a mere homemaker to a smart and efficient employee. Edith believes that an employee's appearance can directly influence their work. Moreover, as the job of the salesgirls demands, an employee's appearance can improve one's quality of work. Therefore, she prepares Aroti to improve her appearance and become more approachable to her clients. Consequently, on her visit to Edith's house, Aroti receives a pair of sunglasses from Edith as a gift. Again, when Aroti is reluctant to receive the glasses, Edith herself puts them on Aroti's eyes. The glasses instantly alter her appearance, as evident in the next scene when Aroti encounters her friend's husband on the street. He compliments her looks and assumes she is out shopping when Aroti is attending her office hours.

Therefore, it can be said that Aroti is no longer a woman who attends household chores but a smart lady who holds a decent job on a wealthy farm.

The bond between Aroti and Edith grows even more robust through their continuous communication and exchange of good gestures. As a result, Aroti comes forward to protect Edith when she is insulted by Mr. Mukherjee. Mr. Mukherjee alleges that Aroti deliberately absconded from her office duties to engage in some of her private affairs to entertain the guests. Moreover, Mr. Mukherjee fires Edith from her job. Regarding Aroti 's knowledge, she immediately asked Mr. Mukherjee to apologize to Edith for his inappropriate words. As Mr. Mukherjee is clueless about why Aroti is fighting against him for an Anglo-Indian Girl, Aroti informs Mr. Mukherjee that Edith is more than a colleague to her; Edith is her friend. Mr. Mukherjee typecasts all the Anglo-Indian girls and expresses his disdain towards them, complaining that they are involved in immoral activities in the city. Aroti refutes Mr. Gupta's statement, stating that she is unaware of any other Anglo-Indian girl, but she is confident about Edith, whom she has known for the last six months. As Mr. Mukherjee denies asking for forgiveness from Edith, Aroti throws the resignation letter to Mr. Mukherjee's table in the latter's utter astonishment. While Mr. Mukherjee is offering a promotion to Aroti, the latter prioritizes friendship, respect, and integrity as reasons for quitting her job.

Section- II

3.3 Intertextual Dialogism and Character Reconfiguration

In adapting Mitra's story, Ray's film has significantly reconfigured its central characters. Moreover, Mitra's story mentions a host of nine members in Subroto's family, but Ray has restructured his plot with only six characters. Among them, two of the characters in Ray's film are minors who have limited screen presence. However, the primary reconstruction

occurs with three main characters— Priyagopal, Subroto, and Aroti. The idea of intertextual dialogism would help to understand the rewriting of these characters on the screen. The intertextuality of these reconfigured characters often derives from both Mitra's host of other stories and Ray's contemporary films. Thus, a methodological approach of intertextuality in adaptation can help to unravel the new avatar of the characters on the screen. However, the materialism of optimism that the characters display springs only from Ray's vision and ideals, besides having an intertextual affinity with other texts and characters.

"Adaptations can take an activist stance towards their source texts, inserting them towards a much broader intertextual dialogism" (Stam 64)— writes the adaptation theorist Robert Stam in his seminal essay, 'Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation' (2000), developing the idea of 'intertextual dialogism,' drawing primarily from Bakhtin's concept of 'dialogism' and intertextual theories of Kristeva and Genette. In the broadest sense, intertextual dialogism refers to the infinite and open-ended possibilities generated by all the discursive practices of a culture, the entire matrix of communicative utterances within which the artistic text is situated, which reach the text not only through recognizable influences but also through a subtle process of dissemination (64). Stam applies these intertextual references in film adaptations, where he proposes that film adaptations ... are caught up in the ongoing whirl of intertextual reference and transformation, of texts generating other texts in an endless process of recycling, transformation, and transmutation, with no clear point of origin'' (66). Robert Stam's goal behind developing this notion of intertextual dialogism was to show an alternative method against the dominant trend of fidelity criticism in adaptation studies and to break the sacrosanct status of the 'source text' in adaptation studies.

A critical aspect of intertextuality in the film adaptation is that it is not the source text which is an intertextual reference of the adaptation.

Instead, it explores the intertextualities of both the source and the adaptation—" [F]ilm adaptation can be seen as a kind of multileveled negotiations of intertexts. Therefore, it is often productive to ask these questions: precisely what generic intertexts are invoked by source texts and which by the filmic adaptation?" (64). The argument is appropriated in one of Thomas Leitch's commentaries about the intertextualities of adaptation – "although it is certainly true that adaptations are intertexts, it is equally true that their precursors are intertexts because every text is an intertext that depends for its interpretation on the shared assumption about language, culture, narrative, and presentational convention'' (''Twelve Fallacies" 167). In the same manner, the intertextuality of these characters often derives from two levels. The characters in Mitra's 'Abataranika' must have intertextual references from Mitra's other texts. While these characters are reconfigured in adaptation, they also share intertextuality with the other characters of Mitra's stories as well as characters from Ray's own oeuvre of films. Therefore, an analysis of the intertextual approach in the adaptation would help to understand the gradual reconfiguration from Mitra's text to Ray's film.

3.3.1 Priyagopal and his Orthodoxy in 'Abataranika'

Priyagopal is the most senior member of Subroto's family. Before immigrating to Calcutta, he worked as an officer under a landlord in East Pakistan (Now Bangladesh). Priyagopal has been nurturing old, traditional middle-class values his entire life. His traditional values never allow him to see the progress of women. Thus, Priyagopal denies Aroti's further education after marriage. Priyagopal dictates to Aroti, "Neither school nor college, there is no bigger university in the world than home. What you learn here cannot be gained at any university" (Ray, "Abataranika" 125)[5]. Thus, Priyagopal believes that a woman's education should only lead her to enter her in-laws' family. He does not support the idea that Aroti, his daughter-in-law, should work outside the home in the office. Priyagopal's immediate reaction when he is informed that Aroti is starting a job is, "How

can I believe that a lady from the Mazumdar family would work outside while I am alive" (127)? Through this statement, it reveals that Priyagopal's belief system is generational. He is more concerned with protecting these generational middle-class values and is reluctant to negotiate any change in his middle-class values.

When Priyagopal is concerned about keeping his generational middle-class values intact, Subroto argues that he cannot run a family of nine members with a single person's earnings. So, he asks Aroti to take a job to support the family financially. However, Priyagopal refutes Subroto's argument, stating that when he was only seventeen years old, he had to take responsibility for a family of fourteen members, but he did not force his wife to take a job. Although Subroto argues that times have changed, and the economic pressure in the household has increased. Subroto informs him that all his friends ask their wives to take jobs and support their families economically. However, Priyagopal sticks to his principles and remarks that he is less concerned about others, but he cannot approve of any woman in his family working outside of the household ("Abataranika" 128).

When Subroto and Aroti decide against Priyagopal's consent, the latter starts a silent protest against them. After receiving her first month's salary, Aroti tries to offer some money to Priyagopal as a gift, who refuses to accept it. Priyagopal believes that Aroti tries to bribe him by offering him money. Therefore, Priyagopal thinks that nobody can make him compromise his traditional values. Regarding Priyagopal's response to receiving bribes, the narrative flashbacks to Priyagopal's past when he was an employee in Zamindar's office. It reveals that Priyagopal received bribes regularly from not just the poor farmers but also from their wives (132). Thus, back in those days, Priyagopal used to accept bribes as gifts. It reveals the contradictory nature of Priyagopal's character. He also becomes a hypocrite as he considers Aroti's offering a bribe, whereas Aroti's main purpose is to offer Priyagopal money on his birthday.

Apart from refusing to accept Aroti's money, Priyagopal often complains about Aroti 's nature of the job. At the beginning of Mitra's story, Priyagopal and Sarojini create a ruckus about Aroti 's late return to the house from the office. For this reason, Priyagopal chastises Subroto as he believes that because of the latter, Aroti dares to break the middle-class principles that do not allow their female members to stay outside the home after the evening. Although Aroti seems to face no problems because of her late return, Priyagopal tries to forcibly impose rigid middle-class values upon her. Priyagopal also grows suspicious of Aroti 's morality, as his old friends and familiar people inform him that Aroti is seen roaming with strangers in the Calcutta streets.

In this way, Priyagopal remains unsupportive of Aroti throughout her journey as an earner. Therefore, when Aroti resigns from her job, both Subroto and Sarojini criticize her decision, pointing out that the family is in a dire economic crisis, especially since Subroto has already lost his job. Subroto and Sarojini believe that Aroti should not have resigned from the job because of some Anglo-Indian girl. In such a critical moment, Priyagopal, who has been the strongest critic of Aroti, remains unresponsive towards Aroti 's decision. Instead, the narrative mentions that Priyagopal enjoys his pomegranate juice mixed with *swarna sindoor* fruit. Through this gesture of Priyagopal, it is perceived that he no longer bothers Aroti 's actions and well-being in the family. However, it is also evident that until the end of the narrative, Priyagopal opposes Aroti either through vehement words or silent, non-cooperative behavior.

3.3.2 Priyagopal embraces the changing values in Ray's film

Like all other characters in Ray's film, Priyagopal also inherits his name from Mitra's short story. However, Priyagopal's character undergoes a different arc in the film compared to Mitra's story. In the film *Mahangar*, while the character of Priyagopal holds on to his typical middle-class values, Ray further colors the character differently to demonstrate how his

middle-class values are wrought and vile. As the film opens, one notices that Priyagopal's table has a newspaper with a page showing an announcement of a Rs. 40,000 cash prize, some crossword puzzle columns, and a dictionary he is holding with his left hand. Thus, it seems that Priyagopal is solving a crossword puzzle with the help of a dictionary to win a big cash prize. He is not alone in this business because, as the film shows, a few other older men of Priyagopal's age frequently visit his house to discuss winning the crossword puzzle contests. Thus, Priyagopal's attempt to win a cash prize at this age indicates that the family is going through an economic crisis. Priyagopal, whose economic demands have not been fulfilled by his son Subroto, leaves no stone unturned to earn money from any possible sources. However, Aroti complains to Priyagopal that he has been straining his eyesight by trying to read the tiny characters in the dictionary and the newspaper. Moreover, even after Priyagopal's several requests to Subroto, the latter failed to buy him glasses because of his limited income. On the other hand, Priyagopal, at no cost, is ready to get rid of his addiction to earning money.

Notwithstanding sustaining a family of limited means, Priyagopal's addiction to earning money has led him to grow an interest in gambling. He secretly seeks money from Sarojini outside the knowledge of his son and daughter-in-law. Sarojini is also tired of Priyagopal's hunger for money at this age. She wonders how her husband has been intrigued by this destructive addiction to gambling, leading to this age Priyagopal is in right now. Therefore, she initially refuses to offer him anything, claiming she no longer receives money from his son or daughter-in-law. However, Priyagopal cajoles Sarojini and promises her to get big prize money in gambling so that they can end this life of chill penury and move somewhere else. Therefore, it seems that Sarojini also longs for an end to this life of poverty. Sorojini, on the other hand, always supports her husband and advocates Priyagopal's principles in her life. In the film, Sarojini is given a lesser amount of screen time than the other three members of her house,

which means she implies her opinion does not have a special place; instead, it comes through Priyagopal's views.

Therefore, in Ray's film, it is observed that both Priyagopal and Sarojini do not stand by Subroto when he is the only breadwinner in the family. Instead, Priyagopal finds means aggravating the family expenses. These actions of Priyagopal reveal that he is portrayed as a selfish character concerned about himself and Sarojini. In Mitra's text, Priyagopal and Sarojini and their three children joined Subroto and Aroti's family. So, the older couple was responsible for them all. However, in Ray's film, Bani is the only other child Priyagopal has in Subroto's family.

On the other hand, Bani seems to grow fond of her sister-in-law, Aroti. Bani seems happier sharing time with Aroti and Subroto than with her parents. So, the older couple gets more opportunities and space to be concerned for themselves and become selfish towards the family. However, Priyagopal remembers the conservative middle-class tradition of women not taking a job outside the home. Instead, he alleges that "their daughter-in-law (Aroti) has changed" (*Mahanagar* 00:35:24). In Ray's film, Aroti's change shocks Priyagopal because the film shows that Aroti has scrupulously been taking care of Priyagopal by offering him medicine and preparing his bed and cleaning his room. To Priyagopal, by performing all these activities, Aroti has always been a docile, traditional middle-class woman. Therefore, Priyagopal's conservative mindset cannot accept Aroti's rise to challenge the conventional middle-class limitations.

Additionally, Ray has further explored the characteristic flaws of Priyagopal, deviating from Mitra's original text. Ray uses the intertextual reference to Mitra's other story titled 'Akinchan' ("Penury" 1954), in which an old, retired schoolmaster, Bipin Chandra Chakraborty, who has now migrated to the city, tricks his former students, who are now professionally well established, by seeking money or getting free medical treatment (Mukhopadhyay 335). In Mitra's story 'Akinchan,' the narrator informs that

Bipin Chakraborty's family suffers from extreme poverty due to a lack of resources for earning money in the city. As a retired schoolteacher with a frail body in his sixties, Bipin can hardly support his family economically. Annapurna, his wife, is a homemaker and is unable to support the family economically. Their only son, Bijan, who formerly worked as a private tutor and could earn twenty-thirty rupees, is now unable to earn money and is continuously searching for employment. In such a situation, Bipin writes poignant letters, explaining his poverty-stricken daily life to his former students, who are now well established in their careers, asking them to lend him some money, which he promises will return soon. However, as the narrative further unfolds, it's perceived that Bipin never returns the money to his lenders. Since Bipin's old body restricts his longer travel, his son Bijan carries the letter to his father's former students. Bipin proudly claims to his wife that he has taught his son how to win people emotionally and trap them to offer money.

It is true that Bipin Chandra, like many other characters in Mitra's stories, belongs to a lower-middle-class family. For Bijan, it is similar to Subroto, as he also struggled to secure another source of income after he lost his job in the bank. Therefore, middle-class families' economic pressure and helplessness were undeniable in early 1950s Calcutta. However, Bipin Chakraborty went on the immoral path of borrowing money from his former established students and never returning it. In his letter to his former student Paritosh, who is now a professor at a university, Bipin claims that he holds a share of the former's fame as an established person (208). So, he claims that some money, as *gurudakshina*, because he has contributed to their success. On the other hand, instead of encouraging his son to earn honestly, Bipin pushes him forward to continue seeking money from his old students.

This part of Bipin Chakraborty, a tricky way to seek monetary help from his students, has been inserted into Priyagopal, pointing out the

character's moral degradation. However, unlike Bipin, who sends his son to the students, Priyagopal himself visits his former students. Similar to Bipin's principles, Priyagopal also regrets that as a teacher, he leads students to success, and they garner respective positions and earn good money. However, in this entire event, the teacher's position remains unchanged and even grows miserable once he retires, and the source of income ceases.

Thus, in Ray's film, Priyagopal first visits his former student Pranab, who is now a reputed eye specialist in the city. From the beginning of the film, Priyagopal desires to have a new pair of glasses, so he decides to visit his eye specialist student first to convince the latter to prepare a pair of glasses for him. To show respect to his former teacher, Parab receives Priyagopal wholeheartedly. The film creates a poignant scene when Pranab checks up on Priyagopal's eyes in his dark chamber with only partial light reflected on the faces of the characters. In such a situation, Pranab focuses his thin ray of torchlight on Priyagopal's eyes, and one can see tears rolling down Priyagopal's eyes, which surprises Pranab. With his tearful eyes, Priyagopal narrates his painful days and how his son fails to provide for his essential daily needs. However, Pranab assures Priyagopal of his assistance and promises to offer him a pair of eyeglasses without charging any money as a homage of *gurudakshina* to his former teacher.

Similar to Bipin Chakraborty, whose first meeting with one of his students revealed the addresses of many other students in the city, Priyagopal also gathered the addresses of his other established students from Pranab. Thus, Priyagopal next chases his student Anupam Ray Choudhuri, who is a barrister in the town. It is noteworthy that Priyagopal's approach to seeking help from his students has changed considerably. In his initial approach to Pranab, Priyagopal was a bit hesitant and emotional about seeking assistance. However, Pranab's amiable behavior towards Priyagopal made it easy for the latter to put forward his appeal. On the other

hand, Priyagopal's approach to Anupam is very straightforward to ask for monetary help, leaving aside all his initial hesitations. Anupam, who is not as welcoming as Pranab, seems to get rid of Priyagopal by handing him over a twenty rupee note. Thus, at this stage, looking at Priyagopal's approach, it is evident that his sole purpose is to earn money from his students by hooks or crooks. He is not at all concerned about any immoral side of his actions.

Figure 13: Priyagopal accepting his mistakes Mahanagar. 1963. The Criterion Collection

However, on his third visit to his student, Nabendu Banerjee, a doctor, Priyagopal suffers an accident when he rolls down the stairs in Nabendu's office. The doctor takes Priyagopal to his home and asks the family members to take special care of him, not letting him roam outside with his frail body. More importantly, the doctor complains to Subrato that he assumes that Subrato, being the most able member, and his family do not look after Priyagopal, leading him to chase his former students for help. The incident of Priyagopal's accident brings Priyagopal's unknown activities to the attention of all the family members.

Notwithstanding the fact that Priyagopal holds on to this rigid middle-class attitude till the end of Mitra's narrative, Ray's film sees

Priyagopal transform from a conservative middle-class person to an open-minded person who accepts his mistakes. Priyagopal confesses to Aroti how he has defamed his son Subrato and his inability to provide for the family. He further confesses that he has committed a lot of sins and thought badly about his family members, particularly Subroto and Aroti. Thus, when he asks for forgiveness from his daughter-in-law, Aroti, the latter punishes her, demanding that he must allow Aroti to take care of him again and let her offer him medicine from her hand. In this way, the incident reconciled the long-haul dispute between Aroti and Priyagopal, which erupted after Aroti started her job. Now, it seems that Priyagopal has no grudge against Aroti and her job. Instead, he adapts to the changing times and the situations.

3.3.3 Stubborn Priyagopal in Mitra's *Mahanagar*

Priyagopal's journey from Abataranika to Mahnagar via Ray's film *Mahanagar* seeks considerable attention due to the character's potential to adapt to different texts. The plot of Mitra's "Abataranika" has not changed in the two subsequent rebirths of the text, notably Ray's *Mahangar* and Mitra's *Mahanagar* (1965). However, in both the reproductions of the texts, the medium-specific changes have been made. The character of Priyagopal follows its own journey in all three texts. Therefore, it is obvious that the character of Priyagopal had received modifications even when it was reproduced by the same author, Mitra, in *Mahanagar*. Ray's characterization of Priyagopal mostly influenced Mitra's recreation of Priyagopal. Mitra's text seems to explain the character modifications that Priyagopal received from "Abataranika" to Ray's *Mahanagar*.

Mitra's *Mahanagar* states that Priyagopal sometimes compromises with middle-class values. For instance, although Priyagopal does not accept money from Aroti, he receives necessary items like fruits, medicine, etc., from Aroti. According to the narrator, old age has become heavy on Priyagopal; therefore, this body requires much care and attention. Therefore, this burden of age forces Priyagopal to compromise with his

strict middle-class values. As a result, we see that Priyagopal has maintained a certain silence with both his son and daughter-in-law in his protest against Aroti's job in the earlier two texts; however, in Mitra's *Mahanagar*, Priyagopal seems to be engaging in small conversations with Aroti and offering her small bits of advice on family values.

However, one must remember that Priyagopal has not forsaken his middle-class values altogether, although his old age has lessened his strictness. In fact, he considers himself "a cobra," not an earthworm, as his wife thinks of himself when it comes to dictating the rules of the household and protecting its middle-class values (Mitra, *Mahanagar* 686). By comparing himself with a deadly animal, he indicated that he could go to any extent when it comes to protecting his family values. Priyagopal's provocative reactions come when he is informed by one of his familiar old friends that Aroti is seen spending time with a stranger in some restaurants. To Priyagopal, it is already difficult to accept that a woman from his family is doing a job outside; thus, Priyagopal believes it even more shameful for the family that a woman from their family is spending time with some stranger outside the knowledge of their family.

Priyagopal's visit to his former students in Ray's film seems to influence Mitra's recreation of Priyagopal in the novella. As a result, Priyagopal, who was an officer on a landlord's farm in Abataranika, claims in Mitra's *Mahanagar* that he was also a teacher once in his life. At one point in the narrative, Aroti notices that Priyagopal leaves his house for some unspecified reason, which remains a mystery for the rest of the members. However, it is discovered that, like Ray's film, Priyagopal meets his former students and asks them for his necessary items. Subroto finds that Priyagopal's activities defame the family's dignity. In this context, Subrato reflects that one should learn to grow old. He further adds that with age, one gains prudence, experience, and generosity, along with non-attachment and generosity— that is why we respect old age" (708).

However, Subroto is upset that he cannot find these qualities in his father. For this reason, he blames himself, only stating that he failed to take care of his father properly (708).

Although Priyagopal in Mitra's narrative inherits some of the qualities from Ray's film, Priyagopal's reaction to Aroti's resignation reminds the readers of Priyagopal from 'Abataranika.' This implies that, unlike Ray's film, Priyagopal cannot shun his middle-class values altogether and approve of Aroti's job outside. According to Sen, "for Mitra, the ideological differences between the old and the new are unbridgeable: the tensions between Aroti and her in-laws do not get resolved (8). For Mitra, the older men are of a generation that may not change as swiftly as the times demand. Although they can compromise with the later generation, accepting changes to earn their livelihood, their older generation certainly prefers to be unmoved by such changes. The difference in portraying the character of Priyagopal by the two artists highlights the major idealistic differences between them. For Mitra, the older generation may suffer

3.3.4 The Journey of Subroto: Despair to Hope

Subroto is a familiar middle-class protagonist of Mitra's story. He works very hard to provide for his family as he is the only breadwinner of a family of nine members before Aroti is employed. He works in a private bank called Joy Lakshmi, with a monthly salary of two hundred rupees (Ray changed the bank name to New Bharat Bank). About his two hundred rupees salary, the narrator informs that "the salary he draws from the office would be over by the middle of the month. Consequently, managing the rations and marketing for the last two weeks has turned out to be a challenging task every month (Mitra, "Abataranika" 124). Moreover, he had to pay a substantial amount of forty-five rupees for his tiny house with only two rooms. Therefore, Subroto moonlights as a private tutor beyond office hours. However, he mostly goes irregularly paid or unpaid for this job.

Thus, Subroto always needs a better part-time job to support his family economically.

Apart from being diligent, at the beginning of the narrative, Subroto turns out to be a supportive husband who encourages his wife to work outside the home. Subroto is a believer in providing equal opportunity to men and women in the workforce. Subroto shares with Aroti that many of his friends and their wives around the city are working together to support their families economically. In order to motivate his wife to get a job, Subroto proposes, “Either man or woman, no one can sit idle at home these days. I don’t think there would be anything wrong with your trying to get a job. If you could earn, say, twenty or twenty-five, that would help me a lot’’ (‘Abataranika’,125). However, it is not only an economic concern; Subroto’s sense of equality comes from a progressive mindset, unlike his father's. Thus, in Ray’s film, Subroto points out his father’s conservativeness by claiming, through an ironic statement, “I am a stern conservative like my father. Thus, I believe that a woman’s place is in the house” (*Mahanagar* 00:16:30).

Subroto and Aroti secretly process Aroti's job application, hiding it, particularly from their parents, until she finally lands the job at the Mukherjee and Mukherjee Farm. Therefore, Subroto later took the responsibility of informing his parents of Aroti’s job. Although prepared beforehand for his father’s strange reaction, Subroto argues with his father about the necessity to break the tradition and adapt to the changes in middle-class life. Priyagopal is adamant about adhering to his notion of middle-class values because he never allowed the women of his family to work outside the house, even when he had to run the family of fourteen members alone at the age of seventeen. Subroto counter-argues that the change in time and contemporary city life creates economic pressure, inviting changes to the traditional middle-class way of living. Through Subroto’s argument,

one deciphers that Subroto is very considerate to accept new norms and challenge the old ones simultaneously.

However, an unforeseen circumstance approaches Subroto's life when he starts feeling jealous of Aroti's quick success at work. All of a sudden, Subroto feels that there is a competitor for him in the house to earn money. With her first month's salary of a hundred rupees, Aroti receives a good amount of commission money from which she buys gifts for every family member, including a tin of good-quality cigarettes for her husband. The narrator in Mitra's narrative informs that although Subroto got to smoke good quality cigarettes after a very long time, he did not enjoy that because the commercial odor of commission money seemed to dull the fragrance of costly cigarettes (131). On the other hand, Subroto has never been able to bring home his full salary, let alone any commission.

Subroto's insecurities grow further when Aroti's punctual office schedule hampers their daily journey together. At the beginning of their journey together to the offices on the tram or bus, Subroto and Aroti seem to find themselves and their relationship anew, long after their marriage, amidst the humdrum of family life. The narrator in Mitra's narrative notes that with this new episode in their lives, Subroto felt as though the first few months of their marriage had returned. At times, it even felt a shade better than the first year of marriage —as if their days of pre-marital courtship and love had come back to fill their lives with joy and pleasure (132). As Aroti becomes more engaged in her professional responsibilities, with her office requiring earlier attendance, an increasingly widening gap appears to develop in their conjugal life. Consequently, Subroto starts making many excuses and compels Aroti to resign from her job; on the other hand, she never agrees to do so.

Ray's film further displays how Subroto becomes more vulnerable and grows suspicious of Aroti's job when he loses his job. In a scene, the film captures how Aroti hurries to get ready for the office, and Subroto sits

idly at home. Compared to the initial part of the film, this episode highlights the reversal of roles, which seems painful to Subroto. Gradually, Subroto questions the ethical nature of Aroti's job, pointing out why she uses lipstick to attend her office. Furthermore, in an episode in a restaurant where Aroti meets a stranger, Subroto hides his presence under an unfolded newspaper to observe Aroti's activities. However, Subroto's inquisitiveness diminishes upon realizing that Aroti only engages in discussions related to business, further noting that the stranger appears to be acquainted with her. In his last attempt to check Aroti's morality, Subroto gives a surprise visit to Aroti's office, where he gets to know that Mr. Mukherjee applauds Aroti's efficiency and professionalism in her duties. Mr. Mukerjee also remarks that Aroti is a little impulsive in her claims; however, as a boss, Mr. Mukherjee mainly approves of such impulsiveness if the employee is competent. Therefore, Subroto returns from Mr. Mukherjee's office with a good impression, hoping that the latter will also offer him a job in his hard times.

In Mitra's text, even when Subroto fails to find any unethical aspects of Aroti's job, he remains adamant and continually asks Aroti to resign from her job. It is true that Subroto tones down his instruction for Aroti after he loses the job, as Aroti becomes the only earner in the family. Here, Subroto seems to think practically and prioritizes the economic concerns of the family before his personal grudge. However, back in his mind, he knew that the moment he received an offer for a part-time job, he would compel Aroti again to resign from his job. Consequently, as Aroti resigns from her job, Subroto does not support Aroti's decision, thinking that Aroti's decision leads the family to serious economic problems.

At the end of Ray's film, one notices a different Subroto, who is supportive of Aroti and becomes conspicuously optimistic about finding new jobs for both of them. After resigning from the job, a dejected Aroti immediately meets Subroto downstairs in the office building beside the city street. It seems that Subroto came to meet Mr. Mukherjee in the evening, as

Mr. Mukherjee promised Subroto he would offer him a job when they met again in the evening. However, instead of meeting Mr. Mukherjee, Subroto comforts Aroti and pledges to stand by her. At this moment, they realize they come closer to each other again. Indeed, after Aroti started her job, there was a growing gap between them. However, as they again come closer, they grow in confidence that both of them will find jobs in the city.

3.3.5 Materializing Aroti's Optimism: Dynamics of Faith and Relationship

Mitra's story begins in media res as the rest of the family members are upset that Aroti has not yet returned home, even in the late evening. It seemed that Aroti had grown one or two inches in the last few months. Of course, that may be from the high heels she probably had on. On her right hand was a handbag, in her right hand a tin of glucose for the baby, and a paper bag. Her sari wasn't over her head as it should have been" ("Abataranika" 122). Through attention to the particular details of Aroti, the narrator conveys that Aroti's appearance is not very common in middle-class households. Thus, at the very beginning, the narrator sets the tone with metaphorical elaborations to hint at how far Aroti has traveled to transcend middle-class limitations. The metaphor of heels and height is used to indicate Aroti's height of progress from her middle-class position. By paying attention to her uncovered head, as a middle-class woman is supposed to cover her head with her sari, the narrator also indicates how Aroti slowly eludes middle-class stigmas to adapt to the life of an office working woman.

Mitra's story informs that Aroti was a bright student and had passed the matriculation exams. She further advanced her studies in college before she was married to Subroto. Although Aroti's father promised that he would bear the additional expenses of Aroti's further studies after the marriage, Priyagopal, Aroti's father-in-law, disapproved of Aroti's further education.

Still, Aroti's education prior to the marriage qualifies her as a perfect candidate for the post that Mukherjee and Mukherjee Farm looks forward to employing as a salesgirl of knitting machines. Therefore, to Subroto's surprise, Aroti informs that she is one of four girls whom Mukherjee and Mukherjee Farm have selected among the twenty-four other interviewees. Aroti begins with a handsome amount of one hundred rupees, and both Aroti and Subroto reckon that there is a reasonable prospect of a salary increase at Mukherjee Farm. Moreover, the main purpose of Aroti's job is to help the family.

With Mitra's accurate portrayal of a middle-class working woman, Ray aimed to bring the character to life on screen with utmost realism. Ray's endeavor was most sincerely complimented by the actor Madhabi Mukherjee herself, who played Aroti, as she said: "Not for a moment did I feel that I was acting. The character was so real. I seemed to know her. She was like someone I had seen (Robinson 149). In fact, the film demonstrates the gradual transformation of Aroti's journey from a simple middle-class married woman to an efficient working woman who does not want to end her journey in despair. Instead, the film pays attention to the minute details of her development, culminating in a confident lady who defies all odds of soaring to optimism. In one of the interviews, Ray lays out the journey of the central character, Aroti, in bits and pieces— "[H]ere, a woman who does not want to work starts working at her husband's insistence, becomes successful, encounters her husband's envy, and even comes to dominate when he loses his job; then, ultimately, there is a reconciliation between the two" (Ray, "Master of Art: An Interview" 183).

Unlike Mitra's narrative, which begins in *medias res*, at the beginning of Ray's film, Aroti appears to be a typical married woman in a middle-class family who performs all her household chores. She enters Priyagopal's room with her head covered with her sari, a symbol of respect for the elders (quite contrary to the beginning of Mitra's story)[6], and takes

care of him by providing medicine and beverages. At the other moment, she is seen sharing her kitchen duties with Sarojini. In a delicate scene, Subroto pretends to dislike Aroti's fish curry to save her from extra kitchen duties. The camerawork does an excellent mastery of showing how Sarojini is trapped doing extra kitchen work as she cannot follow behind Aroti and Subroto's communication of signs and gestures, followed by Aroti's smile of happiness.

The film uses Aroti's monologue before her sleep as she realizes the need for her work to support the family economically. She empathizes with her husband's tireless efforts to run the family. She wishes to shoulder an equal amount of labor for the family. Aroti's sense of duty also comes from her close attachment to each family member. Therefore, she is equally affected by the unusual responses from her family members on the first day of joining the office.

As an efficient employee, Aroti grows to success very swiftly and garners Mr. Himanshu Mukherjee's praises quickly. Even Subroto is astonished to see that Aroti has started understanding the office nuances of sales and commissions. Aroti proudly proclaims that she has mastered the art of communication in three languages simultaneously. Although Edith, her Anglo-Indian colleague, asks her to speak in Hindi as she cannot follow Aroti's English, Aroti is determined to converse only in English to better her communication skills. Moreover, it is also noted that Aroti, who was earlier barely exposed to the city space, learns to travel to each corner of the city alone to sell her machines— from Tala to Tollygunge, then Rasbihari Avenue to Shyambazar and Bowbazar ("Abataranika" 139).

When Aroti starts excelling at her job, Subroto instructs her to resign. Subroto fabricates flimsy excuses by arguing that "I will not allow you to work in any office that keeps you away from the house that keeps you from the house until eight at night, and for the sake of which the comforts and discomfort of everyone in the family, even in sickness, have

to be neglected" (Mitra 123). However, Aroti is not convinced of resigning as the job has given her a new lease of life, which she has been enjoying.

Apart from being an additional earner to the family, Aroti's employment serves as a crucial platform for fostering self-confidence and facilitating her personal development. It also functions as a pivotal space for character growth and empowerment. The film delineates a few important scenes where Aroti overcomes her initial fear and hesitation and mounts up to sheer confidence. On her first attempt to enter a client's house, Aroti appears nervous and lacks confidence. She is seen knocking at a stranger's doorstep; however, as soon as the stranger gentleman opens the door, Aroti cannot gather the courage to talk to him and prefers to run away from the situation, puzzling the stranger. However, it seems that Aroti's nervousness is very transient, and she immediately transforms her hesitation into strength and ends up successfully meeting her next client. These little moments of self-transformation led to changing Aroti from a woman who keeps her head covered to someone who walks on Calcutta Street wearing lipstick and sunglasses, which she received from her colleague friend Edith Simmons. This upliftment in personality reflects her confidence and aspiration as well.

However, even though her involvement with the job is quite deep, Aroti is not forgiving of any injustice committed toward her colleague salesgirls. Therefore, she protests against Mr. Mukherjee's insult to Miss Edith Simmons. Mr. Mukherjee alleges that Edith had been abstaining from her office duties because she had entertained some guests over the weekends. Therefore, Mr. Mukherjee points out that Edith is involved in some immoral activities. However, Mr. Mukherjee's comment originates from his traditional views of race and class. Mr. Mukherjee is also an immigrant from East Pakistan. It is observed during his conversation with Subroto that Mr. Mukherjee nurtures a special space for the people of East Bengal. He is even proud to say that a section of this community of people

from East Bengal is thriving in their businesses and is the most successful in the city. Surprisingly, Mr. Mukherjee's deep ties to his community of people resulted in spreading hatred to another community.

Although Mr. Mukherjee patronizes Aroti, she does not subscribe to his traditional and flawed views on community and class. For Aroti, Edith is a woman and her good friend; everything comes secondary. Aroti believes that Mr. Mukerjee's claims about Edith's infidelity are both derogatory and insulting on two plains— firstly, Mr. Mukherjee has no right to insult a woman employee, and, secondly, Mr. Mukherjee's allegation of Edith based on his typical view of community and class is also flawed. Thus, Aroti requests Mr. Mukherjee to ask for forgiveness from Edith, which Mr. Mukherjee outrightly denies.

In this regard, it must be observed that Edith plays a crucial role in Aroti's professional improvement in Ray's film. Added to that, Edith receives a more sympathetic and justified treatment in Ray's film than in Mitra's text, in which she is described as a girl with a dark complexion to differentiate her ethically from others. Therefore, it is evident that Aroti would fight for Edith for all these reasons. According to Sen, Aroti's decision in *Mahanagar* "hints at a powerful source for enduring social transformations. Ethically correct decisions taken by ordinary individuals like Aroti, even in the most trying of times can, film suggests, potentially lead to the overhauling of racial and gender biases, and openness to people from culturally diverse backgrounds can potentially open up spaces for a more culturally pluralist society in the future" ("Women in Post-Independence Bengal" 12).

In Mitra's "Abataranika," when Aroti resigns from her job, none of her family members supports her decision. Everyone is afraid of how the family will run after Aroti and Subroto both lose their jobs. Subroto criticizes Aroti, saying that she must not have forgotten about the family before taking such a firm step. Subroto further labels Aroti as 'a sentimental

Bengali,' who seems to prioritize her sentiment and emotion before the well-being of the family. Subroto's statement here also reminds one of the community-based and misogynistic remarks of Mr. Mukherjee. To Aroti, therefore, she must think of a world without support for a woman like her. So, Aroti's journey ends in despair with tearful eyes at the end of Mitra's narrative.

However, the ending of Ray's film is significantly different from Mitra's story. At the end of the film, Aroti is presented as a confident person who is responsible for her decision-making and needs no validation from anyone other than her husband. Therefore, the film does not feature the reaction of any members of the family other than Subroto to Aroti's resignation. As one reads Subroto's face, it is true that he is a little surprised by Aroti's decision. Moreover, Subroto was on his way to Mr. Mukherjee, who promised to meet in the evening to receive a job offer. Subroto meets Aroti, with tearful eyes, downstairs in Mr. Mukherjee's office and discovers that Aroti has quit her job. Since Aroti has resigned, it is impossible for Subroto to ask for any more favors from Mr. Mukherjee. Eventually, they both find themselves unemployed at that moment.

Though Aroti loses her job, she receives immediate support from her Subroto, who believes that Aroti has done the right thing by resigning from the job. This support from Subroto means a lot for Aroti as she believes that she has regained her husband's support after a long time. Since Aroti started her job, there has been a growing conflict between them. However, after losing her job, Aroti feels that the rupture has finally gone. It seems that they are together again. This sense of being together and faith in a relationship provides Aroti with a sense of optimism. Filled with optimism, Aroti and Subroto believe that they both can find jobs for themselves. In the last shot of the film, the camera tilts up from showing a crowded Calcutta street to focusing on the glowing bulb of an electric pole to metaphorically indicate an optimistic ending. Regarding the optimistic ending of the film,

Ray avers that the togetherness and bond in relationship can bestow a sense of optimism on the characters:

> Yes, it's semi-optimistic. They're optimistic because they've come together emotionally after a long period of separation that's psychological. It's the kind of optimism where they know it will be very difficult to find jobs, but at least for the time being, they are again husband and wife; they've come together. So, this optimism is permissible in the context, I think. That's all– nothing more than that. (Ray, "A Conversation with Satyajit Ray" 152-153).

Figure 14: An optimistic Aroti, even after resigning from the job Mahanagar. 1963. The Criterion Collection

In this regard, it should be argued that faith in relationships works in a dynamic way in Ray's cinemas, which can be analyzed by citing examples from two films that were released in the early 1960s. Ray's film *Kanchenjungha* (1962) explores the dynamics of family bonding, marital relationship, faith, and happiness. Monisha is caught in the turmoil of agreeing to marry his father's choice, Mr. Mukherjee. Meanwhile, she meets Ashoke, a young graduate but unemployed. Though Ashoke rejects a job offer from Monisha's father when Monisha and his friendship gradually grow, Ashoke vows optimism and finds a job for himself. On the other hand, in Ray's film *Kapurush* (*The Coward,* 1965), Amitabha and Karuna go

through a tough phase in their relationship. As Karuna coaxes Amitabha to get a job, the latter expresses his doubt and despair, “The city is ruthless” (*Kapurush* 00:30:25). Therefore, when the relationship is built on strong faith and unity, the characters always find a way to solve problems in their life.

3.4 Conclusion

The above discussion of this chapter establishes that Ray applies the methodological tools of cinematic décor and character reconfiguration to interpret a literary source whose plot revolves around a lower-middle-class family in a city. It allows Ray to use the extensive possibilities of city décor to navigate the film narrative. The artistic creation of one of the finest set décors aptly captures the financial instability of a middle-class family in a large city. The identical interior set décor between Aroti and Edith’s house has also been displayed as a metaphor for friendship. On the other hand, the vast possibilities of exterior city décor are portrayed as metaphorical imagery of progress and promises. The mobility of the tram, the washroom of Aroti’s workplace, and even the lamp of a city street are all instances of dynamic city decor that become symbolic witnesses of a middle-class woman’s rise to confidence and an optimistic future.

The chapter concludes by claiming that Ray uses the intricacies of faith and trust in relationships to provide an optimistic view of life. Therefore, though all of Mitra’s characters surrender to their fate, they embrace optimism and find an affirmative prospect in life in adaptation. Even in the most trying times for their career and family, Aroti and Subroto remain relatively hopeful. The optimism of Aroti’s characters makes it very much more relevant to date. The materiality of Aroti’s optimism can directly connect with the spectators as the “spectator’s body works as the *material source* of cinematic intelligibility (Richard 203; italics in the original). Thus, Ray’s characters, like Aroti, get relevant and find a special place among the spectators, decade after decade.

Endnotes

[1] The epigraph has been taken from an interview of Satyajit Ray, conducted by Kerstin Anderson. The interview has been cited in the references section of the thesis. The current excerpt feature is on pages 204-205.

[2] Kollol, as the name derived from a magazine of the same name (which translates as 'the sound of waves'), refers to one of the most influential literary movements in Bengali literature, which can be placed approximately between 1923 and 1935. Some of the prominent exponents of this movement were Premendra Mitra, Kazi Nazrul Islam, and Buddhadeb Basu. This group of writers was also believed to have pioneered modernism in Bengali literature.

[3] The English spelling of all the character names has been taken from the translation of Mitra's *Mahanagar* commissioned by S. K. Chatterjee and M. F. Franda in 1968.

[4] The four walls of a room in a set are built to provide an accurate depiction. In an interview with Sandip Ray, conducted by me, he commented that three walls of a room are generally constructed to create extra space for placing the camera and other equipment for the shooting. More about the interview can be found in Chapter 5 (postscript) of this thesis. Therefore, in his description of the Ray's set for *Mahanagar*, Robinson explains that there was a lack of space for Ray and the cameraman. However, the lack of space perfectly delineates the lower-middle-class status of the Mazumder family in the film.

[5] The English translation of the passages Mitra's 'Abataranika' and *Mahanagar* has been taken from the translation of Mitra's *Mahanagar*. However, the in-text citations are from the original Bengali texts.

[6] Covering the head with one end of the sari is a household tradition that women perform to show respect to the elders. In Mitra's text and Ray's film, Aroti covers her head while attending Priyagopal's chores.

Chapter 4

Materializing the Dynamics of Interior Décor and the Embodiment of Resilient Characters and Human Unity: Transcultural Adaptation of Ibsen in *Ganashatru*[1]

4.1 Introduction

The fourth chapter of this thesis explores Ray's adaptation, *Ganashatru* (1989), of Henrik Ibsen's play *An Enemy of the People* (1882) (henceforth mentioned in the chapter as *An Enemy*). Henrik Ibsen, the 19th-century Norwegian playwright, is arguably one of the pioneering figures of modern drama. He is the second most after Shakespeare, whose plays have been performed worldwide since the 20th century. The combination in his plays of a suspenseful plot, memorable characters, psychological insight, innovative stage techniques, and, not least, a disturbing examination of moral problems earned him global fame" (Sprinchorn 1). Ibsen's modern problem play *Ghosts* (1881), "which turned out to be a very bad career move," generated scathing lambasts from the reviewers and the critics; however, the bitter experience yielded a surprisingly sweet fruit, after only a year, in the form of a play called *An Enemy of the People*[2] (1882) (320-327). Due to its universal appeal, *An Enemy* has been adapted in cinema three times, two times on television, and a few more on stage, the latest one dating as recently as 2021 by the National Theatre of Scotland. In almost every adaptation, the play has taken the shape of a newfangled transcreated text in a different political and cultural atmosphere. Arthur Miller's 1950 stage adaptation of *An Enemy of the People* was set against the backdrop of the McCarthy-era United States. The Norwegian film adaptation *En folkefiende* (2004), directed by Erik Skjoldbjærg, declares that in the neoliberal era, people's resistance to reason threatens our species' very survival (Larsen 4).

Satyajit Ray adapted Ibsen's *An Enemy* into his film *Ganashatru* (1989) to 'portray contemporary Indian cultural reality' (Ray, Interview with Kirsten Anderson, 210). Following the release of *Ghare Baire* (*The Home and the World*, 1984), Ray took a five-year-long gap from filmmaking, except for the short documentary on his father, *Sukumar Ray* (1987). He returned to filmmaking with *Ganashatru* (*An Enemy of the People*; 1989), the first installment of the final trilogy, which was followed by *Shakha Prashaka* (*Branches of the Tree*, 1990) and *Agantuk* (*The Stranger*, 1991). These films constitute the final trilogy, as they are the last three films of the illustrious film career of one of the greatest filmmakers of the 20th century. However, the theme of the films ostensibly resonates with Ray's observations of the contemporary degraded state of society as he contemplates, "looking around me, I feel that the old values of personal integrity, loyalty, liberalism, rationalism, and fair play are all completely gone. People accept corruption as a way of life, as a method of getting along, as a necessary evil'' (Robinson 340). In *Ganashatru*, a doctor fights against the corrupt authorities of a municipal town to decontaminate the temple's holy water. In *Shakha Prashaka,* an old, retired industrialist father is heartbroken learning about the corrupt and dishonest ways two of his sons adopt to make their fortune. In the final film, *Agantuk*, the protagonist, an anthropologist, renounces the humdrum of city life to explore the root of culture and civilization. As Andrew Robinson points out, Ray has thematized corruption in bureaucracies and politics as well as moral decay in his films on more than one occasion, as he did in his earlier films like *Pratidwandi* (*The Adversary*, 1970), *Jana Aranya* (*The Middle Man,* 1975), *Hirak Rajar Deshe* (*Kingdom of Diamonds*, 1980), and *Ghare Baire* (*The Home and the World*, 1984).); but the final trilogy stands out for its 'defiant individualism,' 'sombreness of theme,' and 'directness of language' (2004, 339).

Ganashatru, the first film of the final trilogy, is also an adaptation of Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* (1882).

Ray's adaptation of Ibsen's play is crucial, shedding light on various relevant aspects of Ray's filmmaking techniques. Firstly, it is an adaptation of a theatrical text, a novel experience for him. Secondly, and notably for the first time in his filmmaking journey, Ray extends his search for source text amongst the Western classics. In this regard, it must be noted that Ray enjoyed enormous exposure to American and European literature and cinema even before his filmmaking career took off. Robinson writes, "Ibsen's play *An Enemy of the People*, written in 1882, had appealed to Ray ever since he read it. He was attracted to its central character, the idealistic Dr. Stockmann, that obstinate whistle-blower who destroys a comfortable life for the sake of a principle" (342). Hence, *An Enemy* is the only foreign text he adapted because Ray confesses that "it struck my mind, and I admired the character of Dr. Stockmann when I read it first in college. Then, I reread it to bring it up to date. Completely transplanted to Bengal. After thinking about it for some time, I had the idea of a temple and the holy water contaminated... got the inspiration to do the film, to do the screenplay'' (Seton 322).

During the shooting of *Ganashatru*, Ray didn't fully recover from his illness, which caused a five-year-long hiatus in his filmmaking and forced Ray to utilize the scope of indoor shootings mainly (Robinson 339). However, the incident sparked criticism among scholars and critics alike who complained about the theatrical nature of the film, including Rochelle Wright, who expressed that Ray made a static staging of the film rather than a cinematic recreation (136). Chidananda Dasgupta, without hinting at the theatrical nature of the film, pointed out the simplistic cinematic weakness of the film (134). The discussion on *Ganashatru* has been featured in Banerjee (1996), Dasgupta (2001), Seton (2003), Robinson (2004), and Chattopadhyay's (2021) full-length anthological study of Ray's films. In addition, Wright's (2006) article provided a section on *Ganashatru* delineating Ibsen's transcreation in India. Larsen's (2022) article also allows limited space for Ray's film, discussing how Ray's protagonist avoided the

European logocentric ideas of Ibsen's protagonist. The theatre director and researcher on Ibsen Studies, Kamaluddin Nilu's chapter on ''The Emergence of Co-dramaturgy: Arthur Miller, Satyajit Ray, and Thomas Ostermeier encounters with Ibsen'' discusses Ray's film in connection with other Ibsen adaptations.

As an only instance of a theatrical and foreign text adaptation, Ray avers, "I have made the Norwegian play written over a hundred years ago absolutely Bengali and contemporary. I think it will be quite good and in a new style" (Ray, *Iti, Satyajit Da* 206)[3]. This chapter explores how the 'new style' unfolds in Ray's two methodological approaches, namely, character reconfiguration and cinematic décor. This study identifies Ray's adaptation of Ibsen's text as 'transcultural adaptation,' borrowing the theoretical term from Linda Hutcheon's book *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006). Referring to the adaptation theories of Hutcheon and Robert Stam, the chapter examines Ray's process of transculturation in transplanting Ibsen's 19th-century text in the 1980s social and cultural ambiance of West Bengal, India. Following that, the first section of this chapter emphasizes Ray's reconfiguration of characters in making a transcultural adaptation. It is observed very minutely how the Norwegian characters gradually turn into familiar Bengali characters. In transforming the bath city into Chandipur, the chapter explores how the town, with all its symbolic allegories, becomes a character in itself. Finally, Dr. Gupta's journey is captivating as he ends his battle against the corrupt official of the town on a high note of optimism, unlike Ibsen's Dr. Stockmann.

Being an adaptation of a theatrical text, Ray's film mostly confines its setting to the interior location of households. Due to this feature, the chapter tends to analyze the interior décor of Ray's adaptation as a filmed theatre based on Andre Bazin's discussion on the defense of filmed theatre, where he argues conspicuously that a film adaptation of a theatrical text may result in a successful film even if the film maintains certain aspects of

the theatricality of the text. Thus, the second section of this chapter is devoted to studying the interior décor of the adaptation of a theatrical text in the light of the film theatre.

Section- I

4.2 Transcultural Adaptation and *Ganashatru*

Linda Hutcheon coins the term 'transcultural adaptation' in her landmark book on adaptation studies, *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006). To borrow her words, in such adaptations, ''a change of language is involved; almost always, there is a change of place or time period'' (Hutcheon 145). Simply put, transcultural adaptation occurs when a source text travels to a new culture at a different time. Hutcheon also notices diverse facets when transcultural adaptations take place, including— an accompanying shift in the political valence from the source text to adaptation, transculturation or adapter's effort to right resetting, or recontextualizing, and changes in racial and gender politics from the source text to adaptation (146-147). Robert Stam (2017) later recognizes such adaptation, which involves a journey from one culture to another, as 'cross-cultural dialogism.' Although the practice of adaptations using sources from other cultures has been a phenomenon for a long time, Hutcheon and Stam have successfully framed them in the lexicon of adaptation studies.

There has been a thriving tradition of transcultural film adaptations in Indian cinema over the years. Although the number of transcultural adaptations in 20th-century Indian cinema (Bollywood and other regional cinema) is less, with the onset of the 21st century, Indian cinema has seen promising growth in transcultural adaptation. There is no doubt that William Shakespeare's plays attract the interest of Indian filmmakers most within the sphere of world literature. A simple explanation may be that his plays are universally appealing on a thematic level, but Mukherjee rightly suspects something more fundamental, ''it is quite difficult to understand

the reasons behind Indian film directors' fascination with the Bard of Avon's plays'' (2023, 2). Much before their cinematic rendition in India, Shakespeare's works came to be known in India through their literary and performative re-creations. According to Suddhaseel Sen, the reception of Shakespeare's works at a global level (including non-Anglophone regions) can be said to have truly begun in the nineteenth century…In the same period in colonial India, Shakespeare came to be translated, performed, and commented on regularly, especially in the two cosmopolitan centers of those times, Calcutta (now Kolkata) and Bombay (now Mumbai) (*Shakespeare in the World* 1). Furthermore, he contests the views of the postcolonial critics, who believe that the reception of Shakespeare was a part of the British civilizing mission or English language education (4). Instead, Sen states, local-language theatres provided the primary site for cross-cultural exchanges since, in cities like Calcutta and Bombay, where the British cultural influence was most pronounced, theatrical managers were keen to adapt Shakespeare's plays, along with Hindu, Arabic, and Persian stories, for local audiences (4). Moreover, he also points out how the early literary reworkings of Shakespeare's works, like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's essay "Sakuntala Miranda, ebong Desdemona" ("Sakuntala, Miranda, and Desdemona," 1875) and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's *Bhrantivilas* (*Comedy of Errors*, 1869), along with anticolonial and anti-misogynist lines, were pioneering in their scope by global standards (8).

In India, the Hindi film industry, often synonymous with Bollywood, based in Mumbai, dominates Shakespeare adaptations over regional cinemas. According to Dionne and Kapadia, the term Bollywood is often used as shorthand to describe stylistic gestures—the mix of dance, music, and melodramatic romance plots—that characterize popular Hindi cinema" (9). Quoting Mira Reym Binford, they further elaborate on Bollywood film as having "a distinctive aesthetic of its own… Realism, in the sense of visual or psychological authenticity, has not been valued. The mandatory song-and-dance sequences, like operatic arias, tend to serve as

both narrative and emotional points of culmination and punctuation. Baroque and sometimes highly dramatic camera movement is complemented by flamboyant use of color and sound effects and flashy editing [. . .]. Sound and visuals of song-and-dance sequences are often edited in blithe defiance of conventional laws of space and time" (10-11). However, the term Bollywood could be "a problematic category as it does not do justice to the tradition of Indian theatrical representation and cinema that make up its global content as a film form," but like the term Hollywood, the word Bollywood has "a useful pliancy as it defines the globalization of Indian filmmaking and its political and aesthetic vibrancy" (8). According to Rachel Dwyer, "Hindi cinema has itself been transformed since 1991, particularly with the formation of what is now known as 'Bollywood,' the high-profile, globalized mainstream cinema that lies at the heart of the growing entertainment industry" (2014, 8). To mention a few Bollywoodization of Shakespeare's texts, one is intrigued to recall critically acclaimed and commercially successful Vishal Bhardwaj's Shakespearean trilogy— *Maqbool* (2003), an adaptation of *Macbeth*; *Omkara* (2006), an adaptation of *Othello*; and *Haider* (2014), an adaptation of *Hamlet*. A play like *Romeo and Juliet*, because of its theme of romantic tragicomedy, which is best suited for Bollywood movies, has been adapted many times viz. Raj Kapoor's *Bobby* (1973), Mansoor Khan's *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* (1982), K Balachander's *Ek Duje Ke Liye* (1981), Habib Faisal's *Ishaqzaade* (2012), Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Goliyon Ki Raasleela Ram-Leela* (2013), and Manish Tiwari's *Issaq*, (2013). Debu Sen's *Do Dooni Chaar* (1968) and Gulzar's *Angoor* (1982) are inspired by *The Comedy of Errors*. Apart from them, other Hindi film directors like Sharat Katariya's *10ml Love* (2012), an adaptation of *The Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Bornila Chatterjee's *The Hungry* (2017), an adaptation of *Titus Andronicus* proliferate the number.

Apart from Bollywood, regional cinema in India demonstrates the enduring influence of Shakespeare. The Bengali cinema archives a

significant number of Shakespearean rebirths among the regional cinemas. Based primarily on the eastern Indian state of West Bengal, Bengali cinema mainly caters to Bengali-speaking viewers in that linguistic territory. Besides Bollywood, Bengali cinema, since its inception, according to Sharmistha Gooptu, has followed to establish a distinctive Bengaliness or Bengali culture which was driven by a certain kind of self-assertion and identity formation of the *bhadralok*[4](educated Bengali gentlemen), who formed the main section of the moviegoers till 1960s and '70s (18). It was not until the 1980s that Bengali cinema began imbibing the influence of Bollywood 'masala' movies and created a new configuration of *another order of Bengaliness*. (Gooptu 19; italics in the original). This transformation determined the contemporary character of Bengali cinema as since the '80s; it gradually transcended the circle of the *bhadralok* movie audience (19). However, Bengali cinema, too, significantly adds to the list of Shakespeare adaptations. Ajay Kar's *Saptapadi* (1961), based on *Othello*; Manu Sen's *Bhranti Bilas* (1963), an adaptation of *The Comedy of Errors*; Ranjan Ghosh's *Hrid Majharey* (2014), inspired by *Macbeth and Othello*; Aparna Sen's *Arshinagar* (2015), an adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*; Anjan Dutt's *Hemanta* (2016), an adaptation of *Hamlet* are among a few. Rosa Maria García-Periago's (2021a and 2021b) studies have critically brought into notice Shakespeare's adaptation in other regional cinema—M Natesa's Tamil language film *Anbu* (1953), an adaptation of *Othello*; another Tamil language recreation of Shakespeare's tragedy is Dada Mirasi's *Ratha Thilagam* (1963); and Jayaraj's Malayalam language film *Veeram* (2017), an adaptation of *Macbeth*.

However, if Shakespearean adaptations are easy to locate, one must search patiently to find non-Shakespearean adaptations. The last century experienced transcultural adaptation of *The Thousand and One Nights* **(**Arabian Nights) stories in Bengali cinema (Mukherjee 2023), and, in Bollywood, novels of Thomas Hardy were adapted in films like *Dulhaan Ek Raat Ki* (1967), based on the novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), and

Daag (1973), an adaptation of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886). The number increased at the turn of the century as one finds Bollywoodization of non-Shakespearean texts, most notably, Rituporno Ghosh's *Raincoat* (2004), an adaptation O' Henry's *The Gift of the Magi*; Vikramaditya Motwane's *Lootera* (2013), an adaptation of O' Henry's *The Last Leaf*; and Abhishek Kapoor's *Fitoor* (2016), based on Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations*. A perennial problem, however, with transcultural adaptation is that they are primarily unacknowledged, and identifying them seems like an impossible puzzle (Mukherjee 2). In this context, it is crucial to critically analyze Robinson's comment on Ray's adaptation of *Ganashatru*: "Had the film been given a different name ('*Public Enemy*' was considered at one point), and had Ray not credited it as an adaptation of Ibsen's play, I wonder whether most audiences would have been aware of any connection" (342). While Robinson's comment augments Ray's creative genius, it also poses a potential threat to discredit Ibsen's source text, which stimulates Ray's creativity. Therefore, unacknowledged transcultural adaptation not only deprives the source text of its due credit but also disrupts the cross-cultural transmission of the arts.

The significance of Ray's *Ganashatru* is that it is one of the very few (non-Shakespearean) transcultural adaptations in 20th-century Bengali cinema. Before moving into Ray's mastery in the process of transculturation, we shall have a synoptic view of Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* (1882). The plot is contextualized in a small coastal town in southern Norway called Bath. The town's main attraction is the Baths spa, which attracts thousands of visitors, becoming the town's significant source of income. Dr. Thomas Stockmann is the chief medical officer in Bath. He suddenly discovers that the water of the Bath spa is polluted with industrial garbage. Peter Stockmann, the elder brother of Dr. Stockmann and the town's mayor, strongly opposes his brother's appeal to decontaminate water on the excuse of its reconstruction cost. No matter how hard Dr. Stockmann

tries, the majority labels him an enemy of the people. Dr. Stockmann resolutely adheres to truth and principle when the majority corners him.

The process of transculturation that Ray communicates in his adaptation shows a Bengali recreation of the text in the celluloid. Robinson recalls how Ibsen's text was reproduced in ''Bengal's theatre, especially by *Bohurupee*, a well-known theatre group, a few times during the 1950s-1970s. But apart from translating it into Bengali, the group keeps the text largely unchanged. Ray, by contrast, transplants the play from Norway in the 1880s to West Bengal in 1989'' (342). Ray's process of indigenization or transculturation begins by relocating the story to an imaginary flourishing town called Chandipur in West Bengal. The contaminated water in the Bath spa has been culturally transformed into a Hindu temple's *charanamrita* or holy water. The idea of the temple is 'Ray's masterstroke' because it brings a political-religious context and makes Ray's film truly 'Bengali in ethos and highly topical throughout India' (Robinson 342). About the origin of the idea of the temple, Robinson writes Ray was unable to recall, though he did admit to being intrigued by the long-running construction saga of a grandiose Orissan-style temple located not very far from his flat in Bishop Lefroy Road, funded by the Birla family (who are Marwaris) (343). In addition, Robinson cites the contemporary cases of polluted water supply in India, including a serious case in the famous south Indian temple of Tirupati in 1988 (343-344).

Accordingly, the film's central character becomes Dr. Ashoke K. Gupta from Ibsen's Dr. Stockmann, and Nisith Gupta, the mayor, and the younger brother, is a recreation of Peter Stockmann. The surname Gupta is common in West Bengal and other eastern parts of the country; the word 'Gupta' originates from the Sanskrit word *goptr*, which means 'protector' or 'governor'. It is imaginative on Ray's part how the surname metaphorically enlightens different aspects of the two brothers. While Dr. Ashoke Gupta, by his profession, has the potential to be the protector, Nisith

is literally the governor or mayor of Chandipur. Ray retained the name of *The People's Courier* with its nearest Bengali equivalent, *Janabarta*. The officials at *Janabarta* have taken their typical Bengali names with alliterative resemblances to Ibsen's characters. Thus, Mr. Hovstad, the editor of *The People's Courier*, becomes Haridas at *Janabarta*; Aslaksen, the printer and publisher, becomes Adhir Choudhuri; and Mr. Billing, the sub-editor, is Bireswar at *Janabarta*. Like most of his adaptations, Ray does not crowd his plot with additional characters other than those in the source text, but he drops the characters and events that he feels are irrelevant in his narrative. Mr. Stockmann's two sons, Ejlif and Morten, are absent from Ray's adaptation. Thus, the character of Morten Kiil, a tanner and Mrs. Stockmann's adoptive father, whose fortune Stockmann's two sons will inherit, has also been dropped.

4.3 The Reconfiguring Characters in Transcultural Adaptation

4.3.1 From Bath to Chandipur: Embodying the Town as a Character

As an imaginary town, Chandipur is situated outside the metropolis of Calcutta in West Bengal. As a rapidly growing town that provides its people with basic amenities like hospitals, schools, banks, and printing houses, in addition to avenues of cultural practices like theatre in 1980s West Bengal, Chandipur has the status of a municipality town. The town is home to a large population, and a place like Bhubanpally, where the Tripureswar temple is located, is one of the densely populated parts of Chandipur. Because of all these facilities, Dr. Gupta is tempted to eulogize, ''Chandipur has no shortcomings anymore. I believe our town ranks as incomparable amongst the smaller towns around'' (00:09:05). The municipal status of Chandipur also indicates the economic rise of the town, a major portion of which comes from tourism generated by the temple. However, it is noteworthy that the corrupt state of affairs in 1970s Calcutta,

as depicted in the Calcutta trilogy[5], also afflicts the lives of residents in a small town like Chandipur.

However, in adapting a theatrical text from a different culture, as is the case with Ray's adaptation of Ibsen, the dramatic elements change significantly relating to the adapted text's inhibition in a specific culture as varied spectrums of ideological conflicts relating to cultural specification influence the drama. Ibsen's text mainly weaves in the drama by locating the plot in the coastal town of Norway and situating its water contamination as a source of the problem. The other crucial sources of drama, which heighten the unceasing flow of drama in the text, are the political rift between the Stockmann brothers regarding decontaminating the baths water, the elites' betrayal to Dr. Stockmann to avoid extra tax payment, and Morten Kill's inheritance, and above all Dr. Stockmann's utmost principles to hold onto the truth. However, Ray's film text uses contrasting ideologies of the characters between scientific and religious beliefs, thereby indigenizing the text. By exercising this, unlike Ibsen's text, whose action flows mainly from the characters' dialogues, the film uses the endless play of symbolisms embedded in the names of the places, character names, and nuanced details of their belongings, and sometimes their specific activities.

The action of Ibsen's drama takes place in 'a coastal town in southern Norway' (*An Enemy*, 281). A coastal town in southern Norway shows much promise of prosperity and development in the second half of the 19th century. It is far from the country's intolerable northern cold and wilderness, where Dr. Stockmann experiences the hardship of life. One primary reason for southern Norway's progress was its merchant navy. By the second half of the 19th century, the Norwegian Navy became the second-biggest merchant navy in the world after the US Navy (Moi 80). Ibsen's inclusion of the character of Captain Horster and his job in the shipping company are references to the significant growth of the Norwegian merchant navy and the eventual economic boost to the country. The

recurrent references to the sailing of the Horster's ship are a metaphoric symbol of Baths town's progress and, as a whole, Norway's progress in the second half of the 19th century.

Dr. Stockmann makes repeated allusions to the spirit of the young vs. the old in the play's first two acts. While he sees the old fellows, like Peter Stockmann and himself, as less capable of making progress, the young people like Hovstad, Mr. Billing, and Horster should be the town's future. In an extended metaphor, the Bath town is also perceived as a young person blooming with success and prosperity. Dr. Stockmann remembers how his life has changed since he arrived in Baths from a comparatively hard life with a minimum income up in the north. That is why Baths appear to him like a kingdom, as he claims to his brother that now 'we can live like kings in Bath' (An *Enemy*, 289). Nonetheless, the impairment of the baths spa constitutes a significant setback to the growing stature of the town. Dr. Stockmann reveals anatomical metaphors people use for the baths in relation to the town. The baths are known as the town's 'main artery' or 'nerve system' (298). Mr. Billing adds one more analogy as he once called the baths 'the pulsating heart of the town.' If the establishment of the 'baths' is the heart, the town creates the image of a body of flesh and blood. Like all other body ailments, the disease of the body's main organ, the baths, soon urges attention and treatment.

While Ibsen's town is more of a geographical location, serving the nationalistic significance in 19th-century Norway, Ray's creation of an imaginary town carries more of a symbolic meaning in the film text. Like Dr. Stockmann's resentment toward the metropolis, Dr. Gupta, in Ray's film, settles in his small hometown, Chandipur, in West Bengal, leaving his medical practice in Calcutta, where he obtained his medical degree. The name Chandipur, as an imaginary place, has a trajectory in Bengali literature and film. In one of Tagore's prominent short stories, "Subha" (1893), Chandipur appears to be a beautiful small village in Bengal, situated by the

riverside. The name is also a recurrent phenomenon in Ray's oeuvre of film and literature. The plot of Ray's first political film, *Devi* (*The Goddess*, 1960), is set in a village called Chandipur. The plot unveils that Kalikinkar, a zamindar in 19th-century Bengal, perceives in a dream that his daughter-in-law, Dayamoyee, is an incarnation of the Goddess Kali. The tragic end of her life was her being put on a pedestal and worshipped until she went insane. The film questions the orthodoxy of religious belief and its fatal consequences. There is also a fleeting mention of Chandipur in one of Ray's supernatural short stories, "Telephone" (1988). The name Chandipur is a conscious choice by Ray for the setting of these two films that challenge the orthodoxy of Hinduism.

The word Chandipur derives from 'Chandi,' the name of a deity, and 'pur,' a familiar suffix in (eastern) Indian geographical nomenclature. According to Hindu mythology, Chandi or Chandika is a Hindu deity[6]. As per the legend, Chandi is another form of Goddess Durga who manifested to destroy evil, and her name is derived from her killing of a demon named Chanda. A chronicle of her deeds, 'Chandi Path,' explains how she manifests in the devotee's lives to bestow them with peace and happiness. Henceforth, the place is metaphorically attributed to the divine power of Chandi, which fights against the ominous force. In both films, Ray employs the visual representations of the goddess Durga to evoke the allegorical manifestation of Chandi. Notably, the film *Devi* (1960) opens with the idol of goddess Durga being worshipped, while in *Ganashatru*, the effigy of goddess Durga is present in the *natmondir* hall where Dr. Gupta's public meeting takes place. Thus, Chandipur, with its mythical, emblematic power, engages in a continuous struggle against religious orthodoxy and dogmatism.

Both texts deal with the crisis of water contamination in the town, which initiates the whirlwind of dramatic flow in the narrative. In Ibsen's *An Enemy*, the protagonist, Dr. Stockmann, discovers, with scientific

evidence, that the water of the baths spa was contaminated by the 'filth up at the tanneries from Molledal' (*An Enemy*, 298). It is generally believed that the water of baths has healing power, which is one of the reasons it attracts such vast numbers of visitors every year. The contaminated baths water has already created havoc as Dr. Stockmann diagnosed water-borne diseases among last summer's visitors. So, the healing power of the bath water has slowly transformed into a poisonous water source, imperiling life in the town. Dr. Stockmann asserts that the contamination is a result of the flawed construction of the water drainage system. However, a corrupt administration led by Dr. Stockmann's mayor brother, Peter Stockmann, turned down the doctor's proposal to renovate the water pipeline system, fearing the construction cost and the inevitable spread of a bad reputation for the baths.

The medical and political concern of water contamination adds a religious dimension to Ray's adaptation, as the film situates the contaminated *charanamitra* (the holy water) of Tripureshwar temple as a source of a rapid outbreak of jaundice (Infective Hepatitis) in the town of Chandipur. According to Hindu mythology, the word *charanamrita*[7] includes '*charan',* meaning feet, and '*amrit,'* signifying nectar from the gods that grants one's soul everlasting life. *Charanamrita* is the holy water preserved after the ritual bathing of the deity's feet at the end of the *pujas (worship)*. Some traditional sacred practices of religion are attached to it as the holy water is a form of blessing of the gods. Therefore, it is served directly onto the right cupped palm, held over the left, and sipped. It can alternatively be collected in a clean container. This holy water is believed to cure all ailments and prevent premature demise. In Chandipur, the Tripureshwar temple offers the *charanamrita* to the devotees. According to Tripuri mythology, Tripureswar[8] refers to Lord Siva, the greatest god of the Tripuri people. He created this earth and its five elements of life: earth, water, fire, air, and sky, and is worshipped before any god in any Hindu

religious worship. In this way, the *charanamrita* is a direct blessing from Shiva.

Within a religious community, these references heighten the sacredness of *charanamrita*. Its divine relation is deeply rooted in the religious faith of a culture. Thus, calling *charanamrita* contaminated implies questioning a community's religious beliefs. It turns out to be very difficult for a religious community to believe that a pious life-saving drink can transform into a fatal one. Consequently, Dr. Gupta's discovery of the contaminated *charanamrita* fails to convince religious believers of the impending danger of an epidemic in the town.

The idea of the temple is 'Ray's masterstroke' because it introduces a political-religious context and makes Ray's film truly 'Bengali in ethos and highly topical throughout India' (Robinson 342). Robinson writes that Ray could not recall the origin of the idea of the temple. However, he admitted to being intrigued by the long-running construction saga of a grandiose Orissa-style temple near his flat in Bishop Lefroy Road, funded by the Birla family (who are Marwaris) (343). In addition, Robinson cites the contemporary cases of polluted water supply in India, including a serious case in the famous south Indian temple of Tirupati in 1988 (343-344).

4.3.2 Reconfiguring Characters: Religious versus Scientific Faiths

By incorporating religious symbolism in the town's nomenclature and sanctified holy water, the film further problematizes the ideological bifurcation between the religious and scientific ideals among the characters. Therefore, the film supersedes the contrasting political ideologies of the Stockmann brothers; instead, the political rift of the Gupta brothers gets further complicated because of their ideological hiatus between scientific and religious beliefs. Along this line, the other pivotal characters in the film-text are also categorized.

> Nisith: Do you consider yourself a Hindu?
> Ashoke: I say most emphatically that I am. There can be no doubt about that.
> Nisith: Have you visited our temple in the last ten years?
> Ashoke: Not in the manner you mean.
> Nisith: Don't you believe in such rituals?
> Ashoke: I'll tell you the truth. I do not follow certain customs of Hinduism. Science has shaped my beliefs. But that is personal. I cannot dream of opposing the faith of someone who worships at the temple and drinks the holy water. It has been proved that the temple water is infected. (*Ganashatru* 01:20:10- 01:22:00; translation from Robinson 344).

These exchanges between Dr. Gupta and Nisith in the public meeting highlight the central debate between the scientific and religious beliefs in Chandipur. Nisith asks Dr. Gupta provocative questions to prove that the latter does not believe in religious rituals, hence attacking the religious institution. Dr. Gupta tries to convince Nisith that the contamination of *charanamitra* is no longer a religious concern when it affects the town's public health. However, Dr. Gupta's appeal seems insufficient to convince Nisith and the audience to compromise with their religious beliefs.

Therefore, unlike Ibsen's text, in Ray's adaptation, the ideological differences among the vital characters mainly stem from their attitudes toward modern scientific and religious beliefs. This discrepancy in belief systems forms two distinct groups of people in the film. One group, spearheaded by Dr. Ashoke Kr, promotes scientific principles. Gupta. As "a man of science,' Dr. Gupta prioritizes scientific proofs and thoughts over religious sentiments. Notably, the name Ashoke in Bengali symbolizes a star emitting light. Hence, Dr. Gupta metaphorically radiates with scientific convictions against parochial dogmatic religious beliefs.

Two other vital characters who constantly support Dr. Gupta are Indrani, his daughter, and Ronen, a theatre artist who is betrothed to Indrani. In Hindu mythology, the name 'Indrani' refers to the Goddess of the sky. She

is the wife of Lond Indra. Indrani is also another name for the Goddess Durga (Wilkins 53)[9]. Indrani, a schoolteacher, is a hardworking woman. She grieves about the lessons she teaches in the class, as she doesn't believe them. She declines *Janabarta'*s offer to translate an English story into Bengali as the story glorifies the supernatural power of the universe. 'Ronen' in Bengali means a person who is an expert in war strategy. He does justice to his name by arranging the *natmondir* hall for Dr. Gupta's public meeting when Nisith denies Dr. Gupta any place to hold the public meeting. His theatre group also runs a magazine called *Mashal* (A Torch). As the name symbolizes, the magazine aims to eradicate the darkness of society. Indrani and Ronen's screen presence, with *jhola*s (bags) hanging on their shoulders, carries theatre scripts or exam answer scripts, complementing their profession. It produces the archetypal image of educated Bengali youth who nurture progressive thinking.

Conversely, Nisith, the chairman, seems to care less about scientific views. Nisith in Bengali literally means night, symbolizing darkness and a superstitious state of mind. One learns from his statement that his spondylosis has been cured magically within a week of his continued visit to the temple. He has a chronic digestive problem, which Dr. Gupta's medical treatment fails to cure. Instead, Nisith believes in the magical power of Ayurvedic medicine. There is no doubt that Nisith laid the idea of building a temple in Chandipur. Mr. Bharghav, Nisith's business partner in Chandipur, who funded the temple's establishment, equally shares Nisith's superstitious beliefs. He threatens Dr. Gupta to find germs in the *charanamitra*, saying Dr. Gupta's medical science fails to unearth the thousand-year-old Hindu religious traditions. He preaches to Dr. Gupta that the presence of milk, *tulsi* leaves (holy basil), *bael* leaves, and the Ganges water removes all the germs from the *charanamrita*. Additionally, one can decipher how Mr. Bharbhav's rings in the fingers, as the close-up captures them when he taps his palm beside the container of *charanamrita* on the table, complement his superstitious beliefs.

Figure 15: Nisith and Bharghav at Dr. Gupta's chamber with the container of charanamrita. Ganashatru. 1989. The Criterion Collection

Haridas is another vital character who can be grouped with Nisith and Mr. Bharghav regarding his views on religious faith. Petra observes in Ibsen's text that Hovstad, who became Haridas in Ray's film, 'is not the man he pretends to be' (*An Enemy*, 333). According to mythological references, the name Haridas refers to the 'servant of Lord Vishu.' He maintains his nature of servitude to the people who could be beneficial for his personal gains. As an editor of *Janabarta*, the Bengali equivalent of *The People's Courier*, he boasts of running a progressive newspaper. Paradoxically, he consents to misguide his readers by publishing the translation of an English tale that informs how supernatural power controls human beings.

4.3.3 From Dr. Stockmann to Dr. Gupta: A Journey from Desperation to Optimism

Dr. Ashoke K Gupta is a medical practitioner in the municipal hospital in Chandipur. He has been practicing medical activities in Chandipur for over twenty-six years. Besides, in the film's opening, one learns from Maya, Dr. Gupta's wife, that Dr. Gupta was born in Chandipur. He moved to Calcutta to pursue a medical degree at Calcutta University. He got married and

practiced there as a doctor. However, his attachment to his birthplace soon brought him back to Chandipur from Calcutta. Maya also informs us that they prefer small towns like Chandipur over Calcutta. In response to Nisith's question, whether Dr. Gupta prays for the well-being of Chandipur, the latter enthusiastically claims, "I care for the town a hundred times better than anybody else, and there is no competitor for me in this regard, not even you (Nisith)" (00:11:22). These initial revelations in the film about Dr. Gupta's love and attachment to his native place, Chandipur, serve as strategic means to ascertain Dr. Gupta's deep rootedness to Chandipur.

It is due to the urge to serve his people with a firm commitment that Dr. Gupta discovers the contaminated water of the Tripureshar temple, which has been rapidly spreading jaundice (Infective Hepatitis) among his patients and other visitors in Chandipur. He secretly sends the water of the suspected area for a lab test in Calcutta and confirms the contamination of water only when he receives the test report from Calcutta. However, his efforts to decontaminate the water face challenges from the concerned authorities of the town. Nisith, Dr. Gupta's younger brother and the town's mayor, significantly thwarts Dr. Gupta's endeavors. Nisith is a three-time elected chairman of the Chandipur municipality. He is also the president of the Bharghav Trust, responsible for establishing the town's hospital and temple. Besides, he is a business partner of Mr. Bharghav, the rich and influential businessman in the town who also owns the Bharghav Trust. Moreover, Nisith is ambitious about the rapid growth of Chandipur and dreams of making the place one of the top tourist attractions in West Bengal.

When Dr. Gupta solicits Nisith's assistance in decontaminating the temple's holy water, Nisith disapproves of the former's appeal. Nisith confronts his elder brother to ask if the latter has any idea about "how long it may take to identify and repair the leakage of the underground pipe where the dirty water of the gutter pollutes the drinking water. The temple should be kept closed during the reconstruction period. Thousands of visitors will

know the reason behind the sudden closure of the temple'' (00:32:20). Inevitably, he is worried that the shutting of the temple might potentially induce panic among the visitors, thereby discouraging their uninterrupted visit. The event can shatter Nisith's dream of turning Chandipur into one of the top tourist attractions of West Bengal. Therefore, Nisith seems to take special care to stop spreading any sort of defamation about the town.

Nisith consistently exhibits cunning and opportunistic behavior. Maya shares the family's past and how Nisith overlooked the old debts and forced Dr. Gupta to repay them single-handedly. Haridas, the editor of *Janabarta*, smells foul play among the temple authorities in claiming the revenue shares. One suspects that Haridas takes a jibe at Nisith, who is also the temple committee chairman. Even as a town's mayor, Nisith, entitled to care for Chandipur, is only bothered by monetary loss due to the sudden closing of the temple above the colossal health crisis. An unhindered prosperity of Chandipur should secure Nisith's subsequent turn as the town's mayor. Likewise, all of Nisith's endeavors toward the upliftment of the town are hidden behind some personal gains. Unlike Dr. Gupta, Nisith could go to any extent not to invite any harm to his personal interests concerning Chandipur. Eventually, he threatens Dr. Gupta about potentially losing his job in the hospital upon further involvement in water decontamination.

Apart from the economic concern, Nisith's disagreement with his brother stems from an ideological hiatus. Regarding the treatment for his digestion problem, Nisith informs Maya, "since my brother's medicine doesn't work for me, I take recourse to *kobiraji* (ayurvedic medicine) (00:06:20). Undoubtedly, building a temple in Chandipur was Nisith's brainchild. He believes that his disease of spondylosis is magically cured because of his continued one-week visit to the temple. Therefore, Nisith and his wife are regular visitors to the temple. Along with this personal belief and attachment to the temple, Nisith agrees with Mr. Bharghav that the temple's holy water can never be contaminated because of its properties,

like holy basil, *bael* leaves, and the Ganges water. Thus, Maya shares with her husband that “his brother may dress attire like a sahib, but he maintains religious rituals and pujas piously” (00:38:25). Unlike Nisith, Dr. Gupta’s cultural and religious beliefs must pass through scientific scrutiny. Furthermore, he certainly disapproves of Nisith’s belief as the latter believes “holy basil can remove all the impurities of the water” (00:32:35).

Disillusioned by his brother’s perplexing decisions, Dr. Gupta seeks support from the only newspaper of Chandipur *Janabarta* to publish his article to spread awareness among the townspeople. It turns out that Haridas, the editor of *Janabarta*, proves to be a hypocrite. From the film’s beginning, one observes that he maintains a cordial relationship with Dr. Gupta, frequently visiting his house. And so does Adhir Choudhury, the printer and publisher of *Janabarta*. Their 'progressive daily' turns its back on Dr. Gupta when he needs them to publish his article. Instead, they are easily manipulated by Nisith to believe Dr. Gupta’s urge to decontaminate the temple’s holy water is an attack on the temple and religious beliefs. Consequently, Haridas and Adhir believe that publishing such an article might spoil the reputation of their newspaper.

Dejected by the responsible authorities’ denial to publish his article, Dr. Gupta decides to hold a public meeting to read his essay and make people aware of the impending danger. A shrewd intervention of Nisith, Haridas, and Adhir in the event is meant to mislead the majority against Dr. Gupta. They successfully interrupt Dr. Gupta from reading his article before the people. Instead, Nisith plots an opportunity to prove Dr. Gupta is anti-religious and agitates the mob against him. Nisith coerces Dr. Gupta to confess before the crowd that he has not visited the temple even once in the last ten years. Forcibly, Nisith proves Dr. Gupta does not believe in any temple rituals, hence attacking the temple’s holy water.

Despite the public meeting’s majoritarian verdict that Dr. Gupta is an ‘enemy of the people,’ the meeting presents Dr. Gupta as ‘mild-mannered,

even-tempered, and a specialist of his profession' (Robinson 343), who is starkly different from Ibsen's Dr. Stockman. Indeed, Dr. Gupta proves to be a rational person, and his rationality develops from his nurturing of the scientific truths. Dr. Gupta prioritizes what science teaches him over religious sentiments. Therefore, he differentiates between scientific truths and religious dogmatism. At the same time, he explains that purifying contaminated water is not entirely a religious discussion. He upholds his rational approach and appeals to the townspeople to pay heed to him about the scientific ideas of hygiene (343). He promises that his efforts will rescue Chandipur from the prevailing danger and restore its glorious old days. Dr. Gupta retorts to Nisith's questions, ''Are you a Hindu?'' (01:19: 40) Dr. Gupta confirms that ''there should not be any doubt that I am a Hindu'' (01:20: 00). One may agree with Dr. Gupta's statement, given that he chooses to hold the meeting in the Nat Mandir, a religious place, as one sees the idol of Goddess Durga at the back of the stage where Dr. Gupta addresses the audience. Dr. Gupta may have preferred some other place than *natmondir* if he is anti-religious. He even reaffirms, "I respect others' religious sentiments and cannot think of attacking their religious beliefs even in my dream" (01:20:42). However, he confesses his reservations against some dogmatic religious practices.

Nevertheless, it appears that Dr. Gupta's rationalistic principles cannot convince the majority. In fact, Ray believes that 'there is a grain of truth in Dr. Stockmann's statement' that 'it's the fools who form the overwhelming majority' (Robinson 2004, 342). The film draws particular attention to the conversation of a bunch of people coming to attend Dr. Gupta's public meeting. Before Dr. Gupta begins, as those people exchange words among themselves, it is noticeable that a few of them attend the public lecture without having any idea of what Dr. Gupta will address in the meeting. One person confesses, "I only followed the audience and entered it'' (01:08:08). The other person reveals, "I do not miss public meetings. But do not ask me about the topic" (01:08:10). Their ignorance can hardly be justified as the

wall posters have already informed that Dr. Gupta will discuss the 'Health Crisis of Chandipur on 5th January 1989 at Nat Mandir' (01:07:40). Their ignorance and lack of judgment have been the focus of Ray's mise-en-scene. One may argue that this kind of majority can be an easy victim of manipulation, as exemplified by Nitish's actions in the meeting to drive them against Dr. Gupta.

Notwithstanding the constant setback from Nisith and the majority, Dr. Gupta receives persistent support from 'a beleaguered minority' (Robinson 343). The minority comprises Maya, his wife, and Indrani, his daughter. Unlike Catherine in Ibsen's text, Maya always stands with her husband through thick and thin. Maya, proud of her 'science-educated husband,' confesses that she no longer differentiates between her husband's and her desires when Dr. Gupta enquires if she ever feels like visiting the temple. Indrani, Dr. Gupta's only daughter and a schoolteacher by profession, is her father's biggest supporter. She, too, advocates a very scientific and rational approach in her professional and personal life. She complains about the education system and regrets the content she must teach her students. Above all, she turns down Haridas's proposal of translating an English story into Bengali for *Janabarta* because she does not believe in what the story offers on supernatural power and its control on earth. She highly appreciates her father when Dr. Gupta writes the essay for public awareness and encourages her father to publish the same.

Dr. Gupta's other persistent supporter is Ranen Halder, a part of the 'beleaguered minority,' an extended family member, betrothed to Indrani. He has established a theatre group along with the other educated young people of Chandipur. This group also runs a quarterly journal called *Mashal* (A Torch). As the name suggests, the journal looks forward to enlightening the readers from the darkness of ignorance. He encourages Dr. Gupta with all his efforts. When Dr. Gupta fails to book a hall for the public meeting in the town, Ranen helps him avail the Nat Mandir, where Ranen and his group

perform theatre, to hold the meeting. In order to avoid any unnecessary interruption in Gupta's meeting, Ranen assures his team to take control of the situation, although Nisith outpowers them on that occasion.

Ranen's real engagement initiates after Dr. Gupta is labeled 'the enemy of the people.' When the mob attacks Dr. Gupta's house, and he loses his job in the hospital, Ranen informs Dr. Gupta that his theatre group and the educated youth of Chandipur stand in full support of Dr. Gupta. Ranen ascertains that his group will print Dr. Gupta's essay as a pamphlet and circulate it among the masses. They are determined to campaign for Dr. Gupta until the authority agrees to decontaminate the temple water. To their utmost astonishment, Maya and Dr. Gupta listen to the chanting, ''Long live Dr. Ashoke Gupta" (01:33:25) as it echoes on the streets of Chandipur and close to Dr. Gupta's house.

In spite of the majority's opposition to Dr. Gupta, his avowed 'empathetic humanism' never dies (Mukhopadhyay 39). Dr. Gupta empathizes with the majority, which forces him to leave Chandipur once he is labeled 'an enemy of the people.' In his conversation with Maya, Dr. Gupta regrets the situation of the town and the decision of the majority: "Should I leave? What about the contaminated water, then? What about my patients? Should I forsake Chandipur in these difficult days? Do they never understand what mistake they are committing?'' (01:24:20). At this critical juncture, along with the support of 'the beleaguered minority,' Dr. Gupta's empathetic humanism drives him to work for the majority again. Dr. Gupta keeps faith in humanism and solidarity and proudly proclaims, ''I may be an enemy of the people, but I have many friends. I am not alone'' (01:34:00).

In addition to his rational thinking about scientific truth, Dr. Gupta also embraces humanism. In this context, it is crucial to remember what Mukhopadhyay has to offer about Satyajit Ray being both a rationalist and a humanist— "as a rationalist, he has to defend reason at all costs. But he is

also a humanist, and this humanism has a broader scope than his rationalism. It needs to be underlined that Ray's humanism is not grounded in a mere celebration of human reason; rather, he foregrounds an empathetic humanism, a humanism centered on universal love for humanism, even when those human beings are innocently irrational'' (39). It goes without saying that Dr. Gupta, too, shares Ray's humanism as Ray identifies himself with Dr. Gupta, claiming that ''the doctor in *Ganasatru*, that's me, and what that doctor believes- that's what I believe in'' (Ray, Interview with Kirsten Anderson, 210). Dr. Gupta shares Ray's ideals of fighting against evil forces in society and advocating humanism as a crucial way of life. It is both Dr. Gupta's dynamic fighting spirit and his humanism that prepare him to battle the odds of society.

Section- II

4.4 The Interior Cinematic Décor in Theatrical Adaptation: *Ganashatru* as Filmed Theatre

In the 21st century, the questions of fidelity, or the influence of novels, drama, or another art form over the cinema, do not bother theorists or film critics to a great extent. Today, a film adaptation of a novel or theatrical text does not question how the fidelity of the previous art influences the cinematic art form. One of the reasons that cinema doesn't face these questions now is because it has become a century-old art form. However, during the initial decades of cinema's evolution, it was often alleged to have been pillaged from the features of theatre and novels, particularly during the literary adaptations. In the early years of theatrical adaptations, great moments of drama were captured on film in an attempt to appropriate the "prestige" of the legitimate stage (Welsh, quoted in Cardullo 218). Consequently, theatrical adaptations of films became known as photographed theatre and, later on, filmed theatre.

The relevance of Bazin, in this context, is that his film criticism in the 1950s perceives "filmed theatre as a photographed play, text and all"

(*Theatre and Cinema*, 83). However, he also argues that the play is adapted to the requirements of the cinema… and it is a question of a new work (83). Bazin disregards the autonomy of the theatre (76). Although Bazin did not deny the historical truth between the two art forms, he particularly emphasizes that theatre as a twenty-five-century-old performative art form was bound to influence the technologically equipped modern performative art form, i.e., cinema, which is only over a century old. Thus, the phenomenon of filmed theatre does not pass for heresy to Bazin; instead, he sees filmed theatre as a successful film rendition of a theatrical play, which has the potential to retain the theatricality of text. To maintain the theatricality of a play, a filmmaker must conceive the playwright's sense of creating the theatrical reality and the drama, which is the soul of the theatre (81). The filmed theatre's major failure resulted in the filmmakers' efforts to dissolve the theatrical reality of the play (84).

In his elaborate defense of the filmed theatre, which he also termed *cinematographic theatre*, Andre Bazin states that the theatre and film are mutually reciprocal in sharing their creative conventions (116-118). Bazin cites how American comedy films were the rightful predecessor of filmed theatre because they were built on a comedy of dialogue and situation, and most of the scenes were interiors, while the editing uses the device of shot-and-reverse-shot to point up the dialogue. Even in America, filmed theatre never received any sort of criticism, unlike in Europe. Because 'theatricality' and components of stage performance were always present in American comedy— both acting and the structure of the story belonged to the stage. Over the decades, cinema has advanced far and broadened its scope as a modern-day art practice, and theatrical aspects of the stage performance have been immersed to aid the technology-supported medium (118).

Ganashatru, as an adaptation of a theatrical text, qualifies as filmed theatre, as seen through Bazin's reconceptualization of the idea. The film's

overall structure gives the impression of a chamber drama film. The film barely contains any outdoor scenes in its entire running of roughly one hour and thirty-seven minutes. A director of Ray's prominence, who advocated a holistic filmmaking convention of outdoor and location shooting since the mid-20th century Bengali cinema, made a film, *Ganashatru*, which mostly commenced with only indoor shooting for the first time in his film career. Ray here seems to follow the theatricality of Ibsen's plot, whose action mostly takes place in the interior setting of Stockmann's house or *The People's Courier*'s office. Another theatricality that Ray retains in this film is the dominant use of theatrical dialogue, which he believes is an essential feature of the film adapted from a play (Cardullo 148). Along with retaining the theatricality, what contributes specifically to the effectiveness of Ray's film being a filmed theatre is Ray's incorporation of the cinematic media aesthetics, notably, the creation of drama, camerawork, and use of décor, which shall be taken up for further discussion in the rest of the article.

Although theatre and cinema display different aesthetic differences, the presence of drama occupies the heart of both the performative forms. Therefore, Bazin aptly comments that "the drama is the soul of the theatre, but this soul sometimes inhabits other bodies too. A sonnet, a fable, a novel, a film can owe their effectiveness to *the dramatic categories*" (italics in the original; 81). Roger Manvell particularly focuses on Bazin's differentiation between the theatrical and dramatic by stating that the dramatic is common to all art forms, and the theatrical is specific to the stage (267). Having said that, in the process of adaptation, even from theatrical text to film text, the dramatic elements are deemed necessary to travel from one medium to the other. In this regard, Bert Cardullo adds that these dramatic elements are often created out of the involvement of the characters in the narrative (10). Even when pointing out the differences between film and theatre, he agrees that in both cases, "the relationship between the people" is of utmost priority (10). The relationship between the people, in its various forms, contributes to the source of drama in the text.

4.4.1 The Role of Camera: Exploring the Interior Décor of Dr. Gupta's House

The camera is always perceived as the narrator of visual storytelling forms like cinema. The camera can offer the viewers multiple perspectives (Cardullo 10). The role of the camera is to increase the effectiveness of the settings. The camera is responsible for the real unity of time and place (Bazin 90). The dramatic primacy of the word is thrown off stage by the additional dramatization that the camera gives to the setting (86). Therefore, in adapting a theatrical text onto the screen, the camera highlights the major differences between staging and filming. At a stage performance, the audience can perceive what can be "one shot and full picture of the stage'' (Cardullo 10). The spectator can experience the presence of all the human actors and the inanimate objects on the stage at a single glance. Thus, the theatrical space is open to the audience once the curtain is removed. On the contrary, the narratorial camera can opt for the visuals that can be shown on the screen. Even in an interior or exterior scene, it is not the film's setting but rather the narratorial camera that creates a reality of cinematic space.

Ray's set design for *Ganashatru* apparently imitates the theatrical stage design of Ibsen's *An Enemy*.

> Evening. Dr. Stockmann's living room, simply but attractively furnished and decorated. In the side wall to the right are two doors, the farther one leading out to the hall, and the nearer into the DOCTOR'S study. In the facing wall, directly opposite the hall door, is a door to the family's living quarters. At the middle of this wall stands the stove; closer in the foreground, a sofa with a mirror above it… In the back wall, an open door to the dining room (Ibsen, 283).

In adapting Ibsen, Ray's set design for Dr. Gupta's house follows Ibsen's stage instructions. In Ray's mise-en-scene, too, there are four doors on the opposite walls of the drawing room (Equivalent to Dr. Stockmann's living room), which lead to the different parts of the house— the kitchen, Dr.

Gupta's study, living quarters, and the hall. The camera captures the gradual entry and exits of the characters, almost maintaining the theatrical stage decorum. However, the function of the camera gradually transforms the theatrical space of Dr. Gupta's interior house into a cinematic one.

One distinct transition from the theatrical to the cinematic reality of space is the difference in the moment between Dr. Stockmann and Dr. Gupta's receiving the medical letter and revealing the discovery of water pollution before the households. After the revelation of water contamination, there is a change of emotions among the characters, mainly led by Dr Stockmann or Dr Gupta. The expressions change from the casual dinner table or drawing room discussion to sudden shock and escalating to Dr. Stockman or Dr. Gupta's outburst of anger towards the ineffective authority of the town. Thus, in Ibsen's text, in order to fetch this sudden shift of emotion among the characters, the doctor leaves the dinner table and goes to his study to read the letter that he received from Petra. Meanwhile, other characters continue with day-to-day conversations as Petra shares her teaching experience in the school. In the next moment, the doctor is shocked as he re-enters the stage, eliciting a sense of astonishment among the characters as he disseminates information about polluted water. If Dr. Stockmann had remained continuously present on the stage, there could have been a potential conflict of attention for the audience as they simultaneously had to listen to other actors as well as see Dr. Stockmann reading the letter on stage. Evidently, the doctor's exit is indispensable in this scene, as he carries out the much-needed shocking expression to the effect of a notable alteration in the stage ambiance.

However, in Ray's film, when Dr Gupta receives the letter from Indrani, he refrains from retreating to his chamber; instead, he remains situated in the drawing room, purposefully creating a physical distance from the others. On that occasion, the camera creates a cinematic space for Dr Gupta, who is still present in the drawing room, hiding him from the screen.

Instead, it takes a full shot of Indrani and others sitting on the sofa talking about day-to-day things. All of a sudden, Indrani stops her words in the middle of the conversation and finds a worried Dr Gupta standing in the corner of the room with a letter in his hand. Thus, the editing takes a quick cut to capture Dr. Gupta in a close-up shot, slowly approaching others to reveal in shock the dreadful discovery of water contamination. Indrani and others stand around him in a half-circle position, as captured by a large frontal shot, expressing their concerns. Thus, unlike the stage, this scene on the screen did not require Dr. Gupta to leave the stage and re-enter to create the intended transition of expression; instead, the camera creates a cinematic space for Dr. Gupta to read the letter without leaving the room. Most importantly, the scene translates to an equally shocking effect that the revelation of the news demands.

Figure 16: Dr. Gupta distances himself from others to read the letter. Ganashatru. 1989. The Criterion Collection

This film's most efficient camera use is in an iconic frame when *Janabarta*'s office denies publishing Dr. Gupta's article on public

awareness. In Ibsen's text, Peter Stockmann hides in *The People's Courier*'s office when he learns Dr. Stockmann is visiting the newspaper office. However, Nisith, in Ray's film, refuses to hide himself when Dr. Gupta barges in. Thus, when Haridas communicates his decision not to publish Dr. Gupta's article, the camera covers Dr. Gupta, Haridas, and Nisith in a single frame. While the camera takes a big close-up of Nisith's face, who is smoking a cigar, on the right of the frame, the rest of the frame shows the other two characters sitting aloof when Dr. Gupta is shocked to know Haridas's refusal to proceed with the former's article in their daily. Nisith's face in a big close-up with his cigar emitting rings of smoke invokes his absolute commanding position over the situation, as he has already manipulated Haridas against all the endeavors of Dr. Gupta. Thus, Nisith's calm face in the close-up contrasts with the restlessness of Dr. Gupta as the former enjoys the momentary victory against Dr. Gupta in their ideological tussle. Therefore, the narratorial camera can create a cinematic space where the cause-effect interplay of powerful emotions can best be demonstrated.

Figure 17: Nisith in Big Close-up and Haridas denying accepting Dr. Gupta's article Ganashatru. 1989. The Criterion Collection

4.4.2 The Symbolic Cinematic décor of Interior House

Bazin differentiates the theatrical stage from the cinematic medium by emphasizing the crucial function of the décor and editing in both mediums. In Bazin's words, décor refers to the nonhuman elements surrounding the actors, which can heighten the dramatic effect. In theatrical performances, the décor constitutes the *locus dramaticus* (the presence of the stage) (100). Its static presence and unchanged visibility to the spectator throughout a performance cannot cater to different visual effects necessitated by the change of scenes. Therefore, "human being is all important in the theatre" (102). However, in cinema, dramatic flow is reversed as the drama can be generated from the décor, not always from the actor. Bazin substantiates that "this reversal of dramatic flow is decisive importance, and it is bound up with the very essence of the mise-en-scène"

(102). Unlike the static stage, the camera can travel to different settings and capture the varied potential of the cinematic décor.

Ray's film effectively uses both the exterior and the interior scenes, where the cinematic décor contributes extensively to conveying the meaning of the visuals. Since the film maintains the theatrical nature of Ibsen's text, the use of the décor is mostly prominent in the film's interior setting, in addition to two small outdoor sequences of scenes outside the temple complex. Although Bazin's cinematic décor concerns the cinematic frames that encompass the part of nature, meaning the outdoor scenes, Ray's film selectively chooses the indoor settings, which function as cinematic décor as they induce special meaning in the drama. Thus, the camerawork is invested in unearthing the signifying meaning of their indoor settings and their relationship with the characters, intensifying the overall flow of the narrative in the drama. The credit for set design and creating cinematic décor is also due to Ashoke Bose[10], the art director of *Ganashatru*. Mr. Bose successfully captured Ray's vision as he had been working in Ray's film set for a long time, starting with *Sonar Kella* (1974), following Ray's rupture with the famous art director Bansi Chandra Gupta, who contributed to Ray's film in the earlier phase of filmmaking.

In the first sequence of the exterior scenes, the Tripureshar temple is shown in a long-distance shot, also revealing a long queue of devotees at the temple premise waiting, in turn, to collect the *charanamrita* or holy water from the temple. The camera gradually takes a close-up of the sacred water flowing through a tiny tunnel connected to the inner part of the temple and how it is distributed among the devotees who are drinking it. The shot's primary purpose is to emphasize the dreadful effect of the contaminated holy water among the huge flock of devotees. The shot of the distribution of the *charanamrita* is followed by an edited close-up from a low-angle shot of Dr. Gupta to capture his angst as he observes the scenario from a distance. The entire mise-en-scene here goes speechless as the temple premise and

the sight of the holy water constitute the cinematic décor. One can hear the sound of the temple bell and the shouting of the large number of devotees, which also function as cinematic décor, creating a proper ambiance of the temple, which causes significant concern for public health in the town. In the second sequence of the exterior scenes, it seems like the film repeats the first exterior shot of the temple, but this time without the presence of Dr. Gupta. As the pernicious effect of the holy water steadily impacts the town, this shot of the temple is again a reminder of the source of this mishap.

Figure 18: Four shots showing the charanamrita collection at the temple leading to Dr. Gupta's infuriated reaction Ganashatru. 1989. The Criterion Collection

Apart from this minimum scope of exterior scenes, the film's dexterous use of the interior setting also contributes to establishing cinematic décor, enhancing the film's dramatic significance. Dr. Gupta's chamber is such a setting that, although an interior part of the house, stands out as a space that promotes a scientific way of life and strengthens Dr Gupta's moral stance. Therefore, the décor of Dr. Gupta's chamber has been set as a space where the conflict arises between Dr. Gupta and Mr. Bhargav regarding their difference of opinion on scientific temperament and religious orthodoxy. Therefore, the close-up of the container of holy water and Mr. Bharghav's fist pounding on the table intensifies the drama doubly. In the final scene of the film, while Dr. Gupta is ecstatic about getting the moral support of the Chandipur youth, the camera again travels to the desk of Dr. Gupta's chamber, and it takes a close-up of the container of the holy water still present beside a stethoscope lying down on the table before the shot dissolves. Two contrasting elements are placed to evoke the tension. The consistent presence of the container also metaphorically signifies that the holy water is under medical surveillance and must go for medical purification.

Figure 19: Dr. Gupta's medical chamber and the symbolic presence of the charanamrita at the end of the film. Ganashatru, 1989. The Criterion Collection.

The interior setting of *Janabarta*'s office proves to be an efficient cinematic décor in the film. The space unmasks Haridas' real evil and hypocritical nature. Haridas claims that he runs an economically impoverished newspaper, but it always looks forward to upholding the true value of society. However, Indrani observes that the office's interior proves otherwise, revealing a well-maintained and well-off organization run by a team of efficient staff. Moreover, this space always brings out the ill-mannered Haridas when he confesses to Indrani his unfair intentions of visiting Dr. Gupta's house to get a glimpse of Indrani. The *Janabarta* office is also a source of intense drama when Haridas, notwithstanding his earlier promise to Dr. Gupta, turns down the latter's article to publish in his daily.

Dr. Gupta's public meeting takes place in the interior of the *natmondir* hall. Ray's mise-en-scene here faithfully follows the directorial instruction of Ibsen's text in Act Four, where Dr Stockmann's public

meeting takes place in ‘‘a large old-fashioned room in Captain Horster’s house… at the middle of the opposite wall a platform has been prepared.’’ (346). In Ray’s film, the *natmondir* hall has a raised platform at one end of the hall, and there is a vast space leading to the opposite wall, where the audience gathers to listen to Dr. Gupta’s speech. On the opposite sides of the raised platform are sitting chairs occupied by Nisith, Haridas, and Adir on the right side, and Dr Gupta, Maya, Indrani, and Nisith on the left. Like the theatre stage, the characters seem to enter from both sides, take the centre stage, and communicate to a speaker, standing.

Figure 20: Dr. Gupta getting prepared to deliver his speech at natmondir hall. Ganashatru. 1989. The Criterion Collection.

However, in this interior setting, which typically resembles a theatrical stage performance, the film forges cinematic décor. Unlike Captain Horster’s ample room, *natmondir* refers to a specific place of cultural symbolic importance. The Bengali word *natmondir* can be broken down into *nat* and *mondir*(the Bengal syllable *nat* is a part of the word *natak*, which refers to play, and *mondir* means temple). Since Ronen and

his group use the place for staging plays, it takes the name *nat,* and it is also a temple because the wall of the interior is decorated with Hindu ritualistic signs, and Goddess Durga is worshipped here, whose effigy is placed against the wall behind the platform. When Dr. Gupta delivers his speech standing at the center of the platform regarding the health crisis of the town, the camera takes a high-angle full shot capturing Dr. Gupta and an effigy of the Goddess behind him. The shot symbolically reflects how Dr. Gupta is empowered to fight against the evil forces as the Goddess did in her battle with the demons. Thus, the cinematic décor of the *natmondir* and the effigy support Dr. Gupta's cause, although Nisith's shrewd intervention ends the public meeting in chaos.

4.5 Conclusion

In analyzing this final core chapter, the thesis underlines that at the swansong stage of his filmmaking, Ray was curious and innovative to experiment with new styles and approaches in his filmmaking. However, this innovative effort was received with much criticism. In this regard, it is crucial to remember that film critic and writer Chidananda Dasgupta observes, "the simplistic weakness of *Ganashatru* is so obvious and so plentiful that it is difficult to admit into the body of his oeuvre'' (*The Cinema of Satyajit Ray* 134). Thus, critics and scholars often see *Ganashatru* as one of Ray's lesser-accomplished works and tend to compare the merits of this film with his earlier films. This study denies any rigid definition of a film's merit. It conveys that our focus on the technical rigor of art might cause us to overlook several other aspects that may merit our attention. It is also sometimes overlooked that *Ganashatru* achieved a remarkable feat of transcultural adaptation. Ray's recreation of Ibsen's text, which was almost a century old when Ray adapted it, and its apt contextualization are undoubtedly successful feats of a genius filmmaker. That is why one is tempted to agree with Robinson that 'Ray has transformed Ibsen into Ray' in *Ganashatru* (343).

In adapting a foreign classical text, Ray's reconfiguration of characters as a methodological approach here can be studied through the theoretical lens of transcultural adaptation. Most of the characters are inspired mainly by Ibsen's original text, and they are wholly indigenized in the local context. However, in the rewriting of Dr. Stockmann's character in Dr. Gupta, Ray imparts his own ideological vision of human faith and unity as a solution to an imminent danger. Through this faith, Dr. Gupta displays the materiality of optimism on the screen. By displaying this optimism and resistance on the screen, Dr. Gupta joins the other reconfigured characters in Ray's film adaptations, particularly the ones discussed in this study, like Ratan from *The Postmaster* and Aroti from *Mahanagar*.

On the other hand, the analysis of Ray's interior décor creation in adapting a theatrical text can be interpreted using Bazin's defense of the filmed theatre. It reveals that the storytelling through the interior décor makes Ray's *Ganshatru* an instance of a filmed theatre. Ray blends the cinematic and theatrical elements with panache— as he closely maintains the theatricality of Ibsen's text— which are the two fundamental substances of filmed theatre. Observing Ray's fidelity to the theatricality, it could be deciphered that "adaptations of the classics of theatre into films must be based on respect for the original and the desire to reveal, rather than avoid, the theatrical nature of the subject" (Manvell 267). It can be said that Manvell's argument pioneered Bazin's strong comment that "to adapt is no longer to betray but to respect" (75). Therefore, Ray's adaptation proves to be a triumphant moment in reestablishing the mutual dependency of theatre and cinema in the longstanding saga of the stage-screen relationship. Most importantly, the cinematic décor has played both the rhetorical and the metaphorical role in weaving the film narrative, as evident in the two previous films analyzed in the thesis.

Endnotes

[1] A part of this chapter, specifically section I, has previously been published bearing the title "From Ibsen to Ray: Transcultural Adaptation and Film Authorship in *Ganashatru* (*An Enemy of the People,* 1989) authored by Shyam Sundar Pal and Dr. Ananya Ghoshal in the journal *Revista Canaria De Estudios Ingleses*. The article has been cited in the thesis references.

[2] This thesis uses Rolf Fjelde's English translation of Henrik Ibsen's play *En folkefiende* (*An Enemy of the People,* 1882). All quotations from Ibsen's text have been cited from this translated version. The book is cited in the thesis as follows: Ibsen, Henrik. *An Enemy of the People*. *Ibsen: The Complete Major Prose Plays*, translated by Rolf Fjelde, Plume, 1978, pp. 277–386.

[3] *Iti, Satyajit Da*, curated by KS Radhakrisnan is a collection of letters, written by Satyajit Ray and Bijaya Ray, addressed to Nilanjana Sen, a family friend of theirs. In all these letters Nilanjana Sen has been addressed as Jana. These letters reveal many incidents leading up to filmmaking in the last two decades of his life.

[4] The *bhadralok* are the social classes among the Bengali who, since the 19th century, had received some kind of English/western education. They were the chief connoisseur of Bengal's cultural art and literary practices in the 19th and 20th centuries.

[5] The Calcutta trilogy refers to Ray's three films released in the 1970s, namely, *Pratidwandi* (1970), *Semabaddha* (1971), and *Jana Aranya* (1975). These films feature a bleak vision of contemporary city life, exposing the corruption, unemployment, and degraded state of morality. This theme of

corruption returns in Ray's filmography through *Ganashatru* in the last phase of his career.

[6] More on Goddess Chandi can be found in George William's book. The particular book has been cited in the list of references section of this thesis.

[7] The details on *charanamrita* in this article follow the discussion from the monograph *Scientific Reasons Behind Our Dharmic Rituals* (pp. 24-25). This monograph has been published by the Hindu Sevika Samiti (UK) in 2020.

[8] The details of Tripureswar are based on various popular mythological narratives. The devotees across the eastern and north-eastern parts of India believe in and perform rituals for Tripureswar, who is another avatar of Lord Shiva.

[9] The descriptions about the goddess Indrani have been excerpted from W J Wilkin's book. For further reference, please refer to the indicated pages.

[10] Ashoke Bose is an art director who has served mainly in the Bengali film industry. After Banshi Chandragupta, he has worked as the main art director of Ray's films since the 1980s. According to Sandip Ray, Mr. Bose received his primary training in art direction from Banshi Chandragupta (this statement of Sandip Ray has been taken from an interview which features in chapter 5 (postscript) of this thesis.

Chapter 5 (Postscript): Expert Interviews

This chapter features two expert interviews of Mr. Ujjal Chakraborty and Mr. Sandip Ray. Both these interviews were conducted during the fieldwork phases of the research in Kolkata. The idea of the interviews came along to seek expert views on the themes this thesis is exploring. Thus, these interviews will focus on expanding the discussion on the adaptation, set décor, and character reconfiguration of Ray's films. The interviews were originally lengthier. Only pertinent select parts have been included in this chapter.

An Interview with Mr. Ujjal Chakroborty[1]

Ujjal Chakraborty is a filmmaker, artist, writer, teacher, long-term collaborator of Satyajit Ray, and a national award-winning author. He began his career serving as a regular illustrator for Satyajit Ray's magazine *Sandesh* for twenty-two years (1969-1991). This job allowed him the opportunity to receive instruction in painting from Ray himself. Since 1969, his paintings have been continuously published in various leading newspapers and magazines across the country. In 1975, Chakraborty began hands-on filmmaking training as an official observer at the shooting of Satyajit Ray's bilingual film *Shatranj Ke Khilari*. His film education matured through close observation of every step during the making of Satyajit Ray's ten films—from screenplay writing to poster design.

Ujjal Chakraborty worked as an art director and research head for history in two feature films directed by the multiple National Award-winning Aparna Sen and produced by the Indian government through the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC). Under the direction of internationally acclaimed filmmaker Gautam Ghose, Ujjal Chakraborty served as the lead researcher, associate screenplay writer, and assistant director for five international and feature-length documentaries. The titles of these films are—*RAY* (Satyajit Ray's biography), *Indian Institute of Chemical Biology*

(IICB), *Calcutta High Court*, *Asiatic Society*, and *The Image Makers of Calcutta*.

He also served as a faculty member at the Film and Social Communication Institute, Roopakala Kendro, a joint initiative between India and Italy. His specialization was in cartoon and animation, and he received training in the finest of studios, such as Cinecittà and Rai Television in Rome, Italy.

He has published nearly 15 books to date. As an author, he has been awarded a National Award by the President of India for his book *The Direcctor's Mind: A Step-by-Step Study of the Process of Filmmaking* (2008). His dedication to studying Ray's films resulted in several other volumes like *Satyajit Bhabana* (2010), *Panchali theke Oscar* (2011), *Satyajit 100* (2022), and innumerable essays for several magazines.

Interview:

Shyam Sundar Pal (henceforth SSP): At the very outset, I would like to express my gratitude for allowing me to meet and interview you. As a scholar of Ray's films, I must admit that your contribution to Ray scholarship is huge and awe-inspiring. When did it actually begin?

Ujjal Chakraborty (henceforth UC): I have fallen in love with Ray's film since my childhood. I have been a frequent visitor to Ray's house for nearly five decades now. I also started to visit Ray's film set in the middle of the 1970s. All these incidents gradually arouse my interest in writing about Ray's film. If I remember correctly, I started interpreting Ray's film in various magazines and newspaper pages somewhere in the early 1980s.

SSP: It truly seems to be a life-long dedication to Ray scholarship. Since you were a frequent visitor to Ray's house, did you have the opportunity to engage with Ray himself? Do you believe that helped you bring more authenticity and originality to interpreting Ray's films?

UC: Yes, it did. First of all, film criticism is certainly an objective take on the part of the critic. Having said that, A critic should also endeavor to grasp the main message of the film. Therefore, the opportunity for a conversation with the filmmaker can sometimes enlighten one to gather many otherwise unknown sides of a film. However, it depends on one's access to the filmmaker. I am very lucky that I have always had that opportunity.

SSP: Since my thesis concerns adaptation, cinematic décor, and character reconfiguration of Ray's film, I will mostly base my questions on these three themes. Ray has adapted most of his films from great literary masters like Bibhuti Bhusan, Tagore, Premachad, and Ibsen. Why was Ray more drawn to such great classical writers and their canonical texts?

UC: I think it was Ray's ability to engage with the great classics. Not all filmmakers can do it. I mean, a few filmmakers like Ray can give justice to this exercise. In this regard, I would like to assert that there was also a reverse process of classicism. That means that some texts (and even authors sometimes) became classical after Ray adapted them on screen.

SSP: After reading your book, *Satyajit Bhabana* (2010), I have deciphered that you take a comparative analysis to understand Ray's approach to adapting a particular story into a film. You sometimes compare a particular character from Ray's film with the character of Ray's other stories. For example, when studying Ratan from *The Postmaster*, you observed Ray's idea of servitude in many of his short stories. Or, you analyze a particular film adaptation in relation to Ray's other films. Why do you think this comparative analysis proves fruitful?

UC: I always believe that an artist's ideology is expressed in various forms at various times in his career. For a versatile artist like Satyajit, who was a writer and a filmmaker at the same time, it is bound to happen that similar ideas can be expressed through other art forms. Thus, as readers, it should be our job to connect the dots.

SSP: Regarding décor, to be precise, the set design of Ray's films, I have not come across enough material. Neither Ray nor Banshi Chandragupta has expressed enough on this, barring a few small essays here and there. Why is there a considerable lack of attention on this aspect of Ray's films?

UC: This is true. There is less scholarship for Ray's film set. The main reason can be that critics and film enthusiasts did not take interest in Ray's set decorations for a long time because they were intrigued to talk about so many other facets of the films. Since there was this persistent reluctance from the critics and audiences, the film director and art director did not feel the need to express this. In my experience, filmmakers generally refrain from talking a lot about the technical aspects of filmmaking. One reason can be that these are practical exercises, and one must experience them on set to understand the crafts better.

Having said that, I must tell you that I have explained the set decorations of *Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne* in my book *Satyajit 100* (3rd Edition). You may refer to that.

SSP: I have read your fascinating essay " Apel theke Mouchak: Shundi Rajar Gharbari ("From Apple to Beehive: the Interiors of the Shundi King") from the book mentioned above. I have noticed the mathematical application of the Fibonacci sequence and the geometry of a beehive to understand the metaphorical implications of the interior décor. Who do you think this metaphorical role of décor works in the set décor of Ray's other film?

UC: Most certainly. Ray was finicky about the details of the design. He used to have long discussions about the set design with his art director, Banshi Chandragupta. So, paying attention to these details would open up novel ways of interpreting Ray's films. In my essay, besides the house designs, I have also discussed the props on the set. For instance, the design of

magician Barfi's chair indicates an emblem of autocracy. The candle-stands like pillars in the palace of Halla King are also symbolic.

SSP: In your recent essay " Hukumdar Hukumdar" on the film *The Postmaster*, published in the first issue of *Rabindra-Satyajit Charcha* journal, you elucidated the relevance of props in the set décor. Would you reflect more on the prop setting in Ray's films and their relevance in the narrative?

UC: The small props are very relevant in Ray's films. One glaring example, as I remember, is that Ray uses more than twenty small props in the opening five minutes of the film *Nayak*: *The Hero* (1966) to highlight the loneliness of his central character.

One unique characteristic of these props is that they should be smaller in size and should be smaller than the size of the head of the character. Moreover, the size of these small props is calculated so that the characters can hold them with their hands. As I explained in the above-mentioned essay, these props are very crucial in film adaptation because they can visually interpret the literary narrative on the screen.

SSP: I have also noticed Ray's sketches in your essay to support your explanations. For example, you used the sketch of the throne of Ghost King. Do you think the sketches during the screenplay development phase helped to achieve better and more organized set decoration?

UC: Yes, it did. We must remember here that Ray started his career as an artist in an advertising agency. Moreover, he continued making book cover designs, magazine covers, film posters, etc, all his life. Sketches and drawings were mediums through which he could express his thoughts and ideas more easily. Therefore, the sketches were a significant part of his preparation for better set decorations. A film like *Pather Panchali* was completely conceived through sketches. In *Pather Panchali Sketchbook*, one can see the storyboard sketches.

SSP: Did these sketches help Ray's art director, Banshi Chandragupta, to comprehend them better and implement them on the set?

UC: Since the art director Banshi Chandragupta also had a background in art, it naturally helped him. As we know, Chandragupta was originally from Kashmir and was not well-versed in the Bengali language. Though his Bengali sounded like Ray's character Maganlal Meghraj from *Jai Baba Felunath*— with an affected pronunciation. That is why I believe that sketches were a better way of communication between Ray and Chandragupta than any written script in Bengali.

SSP: This is very insightful. It is a very familiar concept that set decoration, even filmmaking in general, is a collaborative endeavor. You have had the opportunity to engage and interview Ray's long-term unit people, particularly Banshi Chandragupta and Soumendu Roy. I read your interview with Banshi Chandragupta. Based on your conversation with Chandragupta, do you think set design can be used in adapting literature?

UC: Set design has a significant role in a film. The process of adaptation starts with the director. It depends on how a director wants to show a literary text on the screen. At the next stage, if the director gives instructions to the art director to design the set in a certain manner, then the set must convey some elements of transforming literary narratives. Particularly, in Ray's film, set décor functions as a tool for film adaptation.

SSP: In my thesis, I am also focusing on the change of the characters in Ray's process of adapting characters from literature to cinema. We have noticed Aroti's optimistic transformation at the end of *Mahanagar*. Aroti makes a quick decision to resign but becomes really optimistic about grabbing another job for herself, which inspires her husband to get another job, too. Why did you think Ray made such a change in the portrayal of Aroti's character?

UC: This is an optimistic change in the story. It also shows Ray's overall approach to life, which is always optimistic. I also believe that Aroti's confidence comes from the director, Ray himself. In some of the films, you can see Ray's persona directly reflected through his characters. One prominent example can be Siddhartha from *Pratidwandi*.

SSP: Ray confessed that Dr. Gupta in *Ganashatru* was modeled on him. Was Dr. Gupta's optimism, which was completely absent in Ibsen's Stockmann, Ray's optimism again?

UC: Yes, it was. I can remember Ray's comment regarding *Ganashatru*'s optimistic ending. He said that he had solved Ibsen's enigmatic ending in his film as the latter was puzzled to bring a proper ending to his drama. Dr. Gupta nealy works as Ray's spokesperson.

SSP: Thank you so much for your invaluable time. This discussion would immensely help me to understand Ray's film better. Before I conclude, I would like to know about your future projects on Ray's films.

UC: My film *Satyajiter Shabdobhuvan* is coming on this year's birth anniversary of Ray. I also edit a monthly online magazine, *OTT Brains*, where small pieces of Ray's film may be featured often.

SSP: All the very best for all your endeavors.

An Interview with Mr. Sandip Ray[2]

Sandip Ray, the son of renowned filmmaker Satyajit Ray, is also a film director and music director who predominantly works in the Bengali film industry. Ray's training in filmmaking started by minutely observing his father at work. He has been a frequent visitor to Satyajit Ray's film set since his childhood. His first contribution to Ray's film came through *Pratidwandi* (*The Adversary*, 1970). His first assistant directorial venture

was in Ray's *Shatranj Ke Khilari* (*The Chess Players*, 1977). Ray made his directorial debut with *Phatik Chand* (1893), an adaptation of Satyajit Ray's short story of the same name. Since then, Ray has been a prolific filmmaker in the Bengali film industry, with more than thirty films to his credit. Mr. Ray has received many awards for filmmaking. Besides being a filmmaker, he also serves as an editor of the children's magazine *Sandesh*.

Shyam Sundar Pal (henceforth SSP): First of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to you for allowing me to interview you. In my PhD thesis, I am working on the key concepts of film adaptation, set décor, and character reconfiguration with special attention to Satyajit Ray's film *The Postmaster*, *Mahanagar*, and *Ganashatru*. Therefore, I will begin with the question of what the relevance of set décor is in adapting literary text into a film.

Sandip Ray (henceforth SR): The set design is crucial to the cinema. When making a film from a book or story, it is very important to follow the story's details minutely. One needs to understand the demands of the story. Following the story's details, there should be a realistic portrayal of the set design.

SSP: As a filmmaker yourself, what do you think are the key components of set decoration? I mean, who do you really need to look after in set construction?

SR: The set is built with proper instructions from the art director. In the case of building a house with four walls, we generally construct three walls and use one floating wall. The floating wall is used to make extra space for placing the shooting camera and other relevant equipment along with the crew. The construction of the ceiling is made depending on the source of the light. The set has to be built in a way so that shooting can be done properly.

However, the set has to be very realistic so that it fits the story properly. If it is a house in a set, it should properly look like a house. While watching the film, the audience should never get the impression that it is a set. Therefore, even after fifty years of the films (of Satyajit Ray), it is very difficult to understand if a scene is shot in a set or real location.

SSP: Ray wrote in *Our Films, Their Films* that set construction is an entirely collaborative act. Based on your experience, how do you think this collaboration of artists worked in Ray's films?

SSP: My father had a team of great artists. All of them are hailed today as the undisputed doyen of their field. All filmmaking departments should contribute. However, my father had a mastery of the overall aspects and would oversee all departments.

SSP: Ray had a natural flair for drawing. Looking at the *Pather Panchali Sketchbook*, we can perceive that he drew almost the entire film. Was he doing this for the rest of his films?

SR: Yes, he continued making sketches during the filmmaking process. He did not prepare complete storyboard sketches like *Pather Panchali*. However, making sketches was an essential part of his filmmaking, and he would make sketches for many things.

SSP: Did he also make sketches for the set?

SR: Of course. First of all, he would make sketches for the set, floor plan, etc. He would show that to his art director and discuss further plans. According to the sketches, the measurements regarding the architecture, size, and length were conceived as part of the set construction.

SSP: Can film sets be designed to serve a symbolic and metaphorical role in the film?

SR: Yes, it can be symbolic. However, the props (properties) as a part of the set play the most symbolic role. For example, In *Jalsaghar*, a lot of props were used for the character Biswambar Roy.

SSP: what are the significant factors for props selection for a character or a film?

SR: The props should be arranged according to the comfort of the characters. Sometimes, it should complement the small details of the story. In the case of a big set, visually interesting props are placed. The idols of the goddess Durga were there in the Nat Mandir hall of *Ganashatru*.

SSP: Are these props collected or prepared on the spot for shooting?

SR: The props are mainly collected from personal archives and props centers. There are crew members who would take care of arranging the props. Sometimes, they are also made on the shooting spot.

SSP: After Banshi Chandragupta, Ashok Bose became the art director of Ray's films. Were there any different approaches in their works?

SR: Ashok Bose was like a student of Banshi Chandragupta. He worked as an assistant director director from *Jalsaghar*. So, both of them used to work with a similar style.

SSP: Before I conclude, can you reflect on the reason for Ray's creation of optimistic characters in his films?

SR: My father never considered black as completely black. He could find many shades in it. Therefore, he would look forward to finding optimism in all possible things.

SSP: Thank you so much for your time. I wish you all the best for all your future projects.

Endnotes

[1] The interview was conducted on 10th of April, 2024, in Kolkata.

[2] The interview was conducted on 16th of December, 2024 at Mr. Ray's residence in Kolkata. I specially thank Mr. Ujjal Chakraborty who made this interview happen.

Conclusion

The films of Satyajit Ray are studied globally and researched under various disciplines and domains, including literature, film studies, media studies, and even historical studies. Given the broad range of disciplines, the researchers focus on various topics in studying Satyajit Ray's films. At the same time, Ray's films cover many themes, from colonial rural Bengal to the corrupted city life of the 1970s to the imaginary kingdom of Hirak Raja. This diversity of themes invites innovative studies each day among researchers across the globe.

The current study attempted to explore Ray's approaches to turning literary sources into films, as he had adapted twenty-six of his twenty-nine feature films from literary sources. Upon analyzing the selected primary sources, the study claims that Ray mainly follows two major approaches to adapting literary sources: retelling the literary narrative through cinematic décor and character reconfiguration from the source texts to the adaptation. The thesis studies how Ray has persistently used the specific aspect of these approaches in three films across different decades and through adapting texts of various subject matters and by different writers.

In an age when film images are mostly created out of CGI and other special effects, it is very important to remember that since the beginning of the photographic medium, the recording of the real image holds special importance in a visual medium with its literal and rhetorical meaning. As D. N. Rodowick avers, "'film' as a photographic medium is disappearing as every element of cinema production is replaced by digital technologies" (vii). Hoberman argues in *Film After Film* that "the digitally manipulable photograph [has] superseded the world as raw material for image-making" (5). Filmmakers no longer - or no longer need to - index the "raw material" of "the world." (Meikle 175).

On the other hand, the cinematic décor of Ray's film was mostly created from shooting either on the real location set or in the studio set. Their invincible realistic portrayal owes much to the amazing vision and craftsmanship of the director Satyajit Ray and the art director Banshi Chandragupta, along with the other unit people and technicians on the set. Therefore, studying the set décor of Ray's films would remind us to appreciate and evaluate the process of filmmaking featuring the real objects and physical reality of the world. Moreover, it also highlights how the real objects and the film, set decorated with real objects, can contribute to the storytelling visual medium, particularly in interpreting literary narrative onto the screen. At the same time, the thesis also explores how the director's specific vision and ideal can reconfigure characters in adapting them into the film from their literary origin.

Summary and Key Findings of the Study

The project is structured into four core chapters, along with an introduction, a conclusion, and a postscript chapter on the expert interviews. and an introduction. The introduction reveals the purpose of the study, emphasizing the literature review of Ray's scholarship and adaptation studies, the research gap, and the primary objectives of this research. Analyzing Ray's perspective on filmmaking and adaptation foregrounds why these films were selected. Moreover, the introduction prepares the reader for the rest of the thesis.

Chapter one defines cinematic set décor and provides an overview of the trajectory of set décor studies in film criticism. It investigates the impact of Ray's sketches during the screenplay writing phase on the set decoration for his films. The chapter argues that Ray's inclination towards drawing and sketching during the process of screenplay development is a direct result of his earlier training as an artist in Kala Bhavana at Shantiniketan and, later, his long-time affiliation at the advertising and illustration job at DJ Keymer and Signet Press before he ventured into

filmmaking. The chapter establishes that set decoration is a result of his early training. The chapter further reveals Ray's process of character reconfiguration in adaptation, citing examples from his oeuvre. It situates Ray's methodological approach to cinematic décor in the rematerializing adaptation theory by Kyle Meikle. Additionally, it demonstrates that the fascinating process of transforming characters from literature to film can reflect how the embodied characters on screen materially appeal to the spectator, as articulated in David Evan Richard's embodied theory of adaptation.

Divided into two sections, the first section of **chapter two** explores the rural setting of Ray's film *The Postmaster* (1961), adapted from Tagore's eponymous short story. It showcases the creation of the gloomy mise-en-scène on screen that metaphorically depicts the challenges of rural life, specifically designed for the newcomer postmaster in Ulapur. The chapter studies how the set décor, which has a plain architectural design, is layered with rhetorical implications that critique the apparent social distinction between the two primary characters.

The second part of the chapter examines the gradual reconfiguration of characters in the film, revealing imaginative departures from Tagore's text. The introduction of a madman character introduces a new dimension to Ray's narrative, hinting at an anti-colonial atmosphere. This section references three of Ray's short stories, where central characters embody anti-colonial resistance, contributing to a deeper understanding of the film *The Postmaster.* The chapter explores how the materiality of the madman—dressed in bizarre clothes, with an intimidating appearance, a loud scream, and a protest against the postmaster—manifests as an anti-colonial response on screen. Similarly, unlike Tagore's story, Ratan, in Ray's film, in congruence with the madman, embodies the materiality of resistance on the screen by refusing to offer the postmaster an empathetic departure from Ulapur.

Chapter three discusses the film *Mahanagar* (*The Big City*, 1963), adapted from the Bengali short story "Abataranika" ("The Prologue," 1949) by Narendranath Mitra. Mitra's story is set in the aftermath of the partition of Bengal following the Indian independence in 1947, in which a family migrates from East Bengal (now Bangladesh) to Calcutta. Mitra's text guides Ray in exploring the dynamic features of city décor for the first time in his filmmaking career. The first part of the chapter captures the minute details of the set décor designed for the impoverished middle-class family of Aroti and Subroto. It further explores how the set décor for Aroti's house sits in contrast with the visual elaboration of the rest of the city décor. The contrast in city décor metaphorically weaves in the film narrative.

The second section of the chapter focuses on Ray's reconfiguration of the three primary characters from Mitra's text- Aroti, Subroto, and Priyagopal. It argues how Ray's deep belief in family bonding drives the characters to express a tangible sense of optimism through their actions, a perspective not provided by Mitra's text. Apart from the affirmative reconfiguration of Priyagopal's character, the chapter illustrates how Ray conveys to Aroti and Subroto his belief that human relationships are a source of strength and optimism. The couple's renewed bond at the film's conclusion redefines their tangible transformation, illustrating a shift in emotions from despair to optimism as depicted on screen.

The fourth chapter identifies Ray's adaptation of Henrik Ibsen's play *An Enemy of the People* (1882) into *Ganashatru* as an instance of transcultural adaptation, borrowing the term from Adaptation theorist Linda Hutcheon. The chapter delineates the process of transculturation in Ray's film by explaining how Ray appropriated a 19th-century European small town to an imaginary small town in Bengal, Chandipur, in the late 1980s. The first part of the chapter unravels Ray's preoccupation with dynamic interior décor to unveil a new style of filmmaking at the swansong stage of his career. Applying Andre Bazin's defense of filmed theatre, the chapter

establishes that Ray's innovative set up of interior décor compliments an attempt to make *Ganashatru* into a filmed theatre. The second part of this chapter studies Ray's character reconfiguration process in the transcultural adaptation constitutive of the mythical and symbolic references to naming the characters and places. The chapter concludes by foregrounding the materiality of Dr. Gupta's resilience, which evolves through the vicissitudes of varying emotions and finds its momentary success in celebrating human unity, unlike Ibsen's Dr. Stockmann.

The fifth (postscript) chapter, divided into two parts, features interviews with Mr. Sandip Ray, the filmmaker son of Satyajit Ray, and Mr. Ujjal Chakraborty, a long-time collaborator of Ray and a film critic, teacher, and writer. They discuss Ray's cinema with special attention to set décor and character reconfiguration for the three films under discussion. These interviews were conducted during the fieldwork phase of the research in Kolkata and aims to document otherwise unavailable sources on Ray's methods.

Limitations and Potential Directions for Future Research

Before I draw a conclusion, I must admit that I am cognizant of the limitations of this project. In conducting a study about a prolific filmmaker like Satyajit Ray, it is a challenging task to develop an argument that would underline the methodological approach to studying Ray's films, particularly his art of adaptation. Therefore, the main nature of the limitation arises from the time-bound framework of the project. However, these limitations would undoubtedly open up a lot of possibilities for future research along the argumentative line. Most importantly, I would make sure to initiate further research.

In analyzing rural décor, this thesis only studies one of the many films, *The Postmaster*, in which Ray exploits the extensive possibilities of rural décor to interpret literature in his early career in filmmaking. It is

observed that Ray builds up a gloomy mise-en-scene and exterior décor to build up the plot, which is dominated by a note of separation and melancholy, in interpreting Tagore's text. However, Ray's film *Samapti*, an adaptation of Tagore's short story of the same title, presents a different cinematic rural décor to portray Mrinmoyee and her joyful interaction with rural nature. Moreover, the film weaves in a happy conjugal ending between its central characters, Mrinmoyee and Amulya. So, the film's portrayal of the rural décor significantly differs from *The Postmaster*. In adapting Bibhuti Bhusan Bandyopadhyay in the Apu trilogy, Ray also creates a different kind of rural mise-en-scene. Though Ray made most of his rural-centric films in the first decade of his filmmaking journey, it is also true that he would sporadically feature rural décor in the later phases of his filmmaking, for instance, *Asani Sanket* (*Distant Thunder*, 1973) in the 1970s, or the central character's return to the rural Bengal in Agantuk (*The Stranger*, 1991). Thus, the rural décor represents dynamic diversities in Ray's rural-centric films. Therefore, this study proposes a comparative as well as in-depth analysis of the rural decor in Ray's films in adapting their source texts.

Similarly, the accurate set design and the brighter exterior city décor in *Mahanagar* complement the overall optimistic tone of the film. Therefore, the city décor primarily plays either a literal or a metaphorical role in delineating the financial limitations of a middle-class household and the relationship between the characters. However, Ray's city-centric films in the 1970s, particularly the Calcutta trilogy, display a bleak vision of the city, wrought with unemployment, corruption, and immoral behavior. Therefore, Ray's delineation of the 1970s Calcutta differs from the city of *Mahanagar*. This leaves us to ponder the diverse city décor of Ray's cinema.

The interior décor of *Ganashatru* and its stage-like resemblance to the character movements have been achieved in transforming a theatrical

text into a film. It is true that the interior décor of *Ganashatru* influences the interior setting of the other two chamber-drama-like films, with minimum exterior visuals, in the last phase. However, in adapting historical or period dramas, the interior décor of Ray's films, *Jalsaghar* (*The Music Room*, 1958), *Charulata* (*The Lonely Wife*, 1964), and *Shatranj Ke Khilari* (*The Chess Players*, 1977), show unique styles with diverse architectural set-ups.

This thesis attempts to theorize that cinematic décor functions as a methodological tool to interpret literary texts into different kinds of films marked with different visual styles. In Ray's filmography, films with distinct visual styles— rural décor, city décor, and interior décor— can be put in separate phases of filmmaking. While this thesis explores the visual appeal of the three different styles of cinematic décor, it also proposes that there can be further exploration within each category. Thus, apart from the properties of rural décor to interpret literary text, as explained in this study, more of Ray's films can be explored to unearth the various other properties of rural décor used in the film adaption. Therefore, the materiality of rural décor can also be identified with other cinematic objects used in filmmaking. In the same manner, the city décor and interior décor can be further studied in Ray's vast filmography.

In reviewing the role of cinematic décor in adaptation, this study proposes that further engagement in exploring the method of adaptation through cinematic décor in Ray's film might initiate inquiries about the Indian way of film adaptation. The natural substances and objects featured in the creation of the cinematic décor on the screen usually come from the country of filmmaking. However, in contemporary times, with the source of massive funding from the big production houses, filmmaking has been globalized. However, during the time of Ray, Indian filmmaking was mostly confined to its territory. In his book *Our Films, Their Films*, Ray

mentions the budget limitations he had to deal with in the filmmaking endeavor (62).

Working with these financial constraints also made the film and the art director to be imaginative and creative with their approaches. Art director Banshi Chandragupta in his essay, "On Art Direction and Pather Panchali," mentions the innovative method of preparing the impression of an old door of a house by burning the available substance of an existing door (87). Subrata Mitra's, the cinematographer of Ray's film, innovation of 'bounce lighting' to create diffused light effect on location shooting is a very well-known concept. All these innovations of cinematic décor were created from the barest minimum available items of filmmaking conditions then. Thus, studying the cinematic décor of such an adaptation could imply an Indian way of film adaptation.

One of the brightest aspects of Ray's films is their immortal characters. Even after the decades of their creations, Ray's characters carve a special place among the spectators. It can be Apu's irresistible zeal to pursue education, leaving his family practice in *Aparajito*, or Ratan's resistance against the deception she received from Nanda in *The Postmaster*. It is also because of Siddharta's strong resistance against the corrupt state of affairs in the city in *Pratidwandi*. Ray's films have many more such strong men and women characters. It is also crucial to remember that all these characters have their origin in some original literary texts. However, their recreation in Ray's films makes them unforgettable.

In studying three of Ray's films, this study has found how characters are rewritten in different temporal and spatial contexts. As we have further explored the topic, it has been observed that the central characters from literary texts, after Ray's rewriting, often tend to be very optimistic and more decisive. Although they find themselves in very challenging situations in the plot, they emerge more assertive, unlike the source texts. Therefore, this characteristic of becoming optimistic and resilient binds all the

rewritten characters from these selected film adaptations. It is also observed that the source of this optimism springs from Ray's strong sense of faith in human relationships and unity. Furthermore, the spectators resonate more with such optimistic and resilient characters.

Having said that, it can also be argued that Ray's characters display several other characteristics apart from their optimistic vision of life. For example, in his film *Devi* (The Goddess, 190), Dayamoyee succumbs to death in order to protest strongly against the patriarchy and blind religious orthodoxy. It reveals that the director exhibits different ideals behind Dayamoyee's sense of resistance, which is unlike any other resilient character of Ray. Therefore, further engagement is required to study the reconfiguration of Dayamoyee's character from its source text. As a result, the reader may get a newer insight into Ray's creation of resilient and strong characters.

Ray's children are a special group of characters that have received less attention than the others. It can observed in many of Ray's adapted films that his children are sharper and more intelligent than their imagined conception in literary texts. The children leave their strong mark on the story through their prompt responses and small yet effective participation in the plot amidst their grown-up counterparts. Therefore, it proves to be a promising area of research on how Ray reconfigures the child characters in adapting literary texts. Does Ray find newer hopes in the young generation? What is Ray's specific vision behind the creation and re-creations of these characters (in the case of the adaptation of literary texts) ?

Furthermore, detective Feluda's sharp intelligence or Manomohan Mitra's indomitable wish to travel the world can also intrigue the spectators. Thus, using the methodological tool of character reconfiguration in adaptation can be very fruitful in revealing the materiality of Ray's characters' strong attributes and how they originate from their creator. Moreover, how they stay relevant to the spectator over the years can also be

surmised. Thus, it goes without saying that the approach of adaptation studies can provide newer perspectives to unearth these long overdue questions.

Finally, this study concludes by announcing that all the future research scopes addressed in this study consider the limitations of the two adaptation methodologies discussed. By proposing these future avenues, this study reveals that these two methodologies can be further explored in many of Ray's adapted films. However, at the same time, this study also hopes for further engagement to study Ray's approaches to film adaptation and proposes newer insights on further methodological approaches Ray uses to adapt literary texts into films.

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