

Chapter :3

Rituparno Ghosh: Translation of Tagore and O'Henry

Rituparno Ghosh started his journey with relationship dramas. These initial efforts from his side, paved the way to reach out to the middle class audiences of Bengal. Though he moved ahead, the façade of human relationship remains at the centre of his works. His experimentation with human emotions keeps recurring in his films. Thus in his prolific works he has his preoccupations and tried to manifest them in different ways. In most of his films he has tried to juxtapose how cinema can present 'absence', as it appears that he can never distance himself from his idea of separation and death. Apart from this projection of absence, he seems to be interested in different crucial issues of human life and human emotion.

The most important aspect of his films is Tagore. He could never keep Tagore away from his mind and his films. Whenever his adaptations come to the forefront for analysis, Tagore appears closer to his filmic world. It would be apt to say that Rituparno Ghosh's adaptations are crucial as it has incorporated Tagore's understanding of art and literature. This kind of incorporations are essentially beneficial in analyzing his adaptations with proper comparison with Tagore's writings.

Rituparno Ghosh's inclination towards adapting Tagore may be for different reasons, that may range from the director's love for the story, to the director's wish to adapt the story into a film - as the literature provides a similar ideological stand on a particular subject. Whatever the reason may be, literature appears to be an inspiration for most of his films. On much simpler level it can be understood that when Tagore's works are always appealing to the readers it can provide an appealing story for the filmmaker's too. For Rituparno, adaptation of Tagore's works is a kind of opportunity through which he got a scope for discussion, analysis, and debate on many vital issues

related to human life and human society. With his own take on all these issues Rituparno has successfully occupied the position of an auteur in most of his films.

The term auteur developed with the advent of *the auteur theory*. The auteur theory began with the critics association with the French film Journal *Cahiers du Cinema*. After this Andrew Sarris tried to identify auteur in a director's oeuvre. Here the importance has been given on the unique personality of the director and his influence on the film. Though it is to be considered that film making is a collective process but auteur theory has left its mark which is very prominent . Few considered the director as a 'meaning maker' who creates the meaning through a larger system. Within such varied perspective on the term auteur, Sangeeta Dutta writes, " In the light of theoretical arguments , Rituparno Ghosh's filmography invites assessment as an auteur's work. Almost all the Ghosh's 20 films are written by him, occasionally co-written (Sob Charitro Kalponik and Arekti Premer Golpo); most of his films are either direct adaptations of or inspired by literary texts."¹ For assessing Rituparno she has tried to explain the term auteur in the following light , " A director's film reflects the director's personal creative vision –that of the primary author. The auteur expresses his thoughts and feelings about a subject matter and offers a worldview. From the time Truffaut advocated this theory , a director's distinctive style or consistent theme are considered defined influences , unmistakable in a body of work. An auteur needs a considerable body of work, which can be analyzed for themes and concerns and display a distinct style immediately recognizable ."² Thus it may be said that Rituparno's obsession with Tagore is considerably the sign of an auteur . Tagore's influence on Rituparno is immense. In an interview with Ranjan Bandyopadhyay in an episode of *Amar Rabindranath* he himself has said "Tagore came close to him from his childhood reading of Tagore's *Sahaj Path*"³. In this interview he has clearly stated "Time and again I have returned to Tagore and *Mahabharat*, I have shamelessly returned to them."⁴ Thus Tagore could easily be the part of this auteur's conscience. As a result viewers can observe the presence of Tagore in most of his films. Tagore became the inseparable part

of his personal style as a filmmaker. Tagore's influence, which basically came to him because of his interest in literature- helped to germinate the auteur in him. Thus, Sangeeta Dutta says , “ Co- ordinating all stage of production and well abreast of his audience, he possesses a personal style and an ‘interior voice’ or subtext. Ghosh, as writer- director- actor- star, defines the auteur who offers a well coded visual library and performance aesthetic.”⁵

Before moving further, it is to be clear that Tagore's works are time and again revisited through the medium of film . Beginning with *Notir Puja* in 1932 , directed by Tagore himself , Tagore's literary works continues to influence filmmakers from different parts of land. The scenario in Bengal is somehow different as here Tagore is not simply a name but an institution himself. Many significant directors from Bengal adapted Tagore. These directors have shown their own particular way of adapting Tagore. When it is about adaptation of Tagore's works in Bengal, the first name that comes to our mind is Satyajit Ray who made three influential films based on Tagore's stories ie. *Teen kanya*, *Charulata* and *Ghare Baire*. Another is Tapan Sinha, who has successfully adapted Tagore in films like *Kabuliwala* , *Khsudita Pashan*, *Atithiand Kadambini*. Ritwik Ghatak , though did not adapt Tagore's stories , still used Tagore's songs in films like *Meghe Dhaka Tara* and *Subarnarekha*. Mrinal Sen's *Ichchapuran* is based on a story written by Tagore. The next name that automatically comes to our mind is that of Rituparno Ghosh. Though Rituparno Ghosh's adaptation of Tagore began with *Chokher Bali* , Tagore's presence can be felt in many of his films through his poems , songs and paintings. In a very interesting way ,Tagore's presence can be sensed in majority of his films. His feelings about Tagore and his influence on him is vividly projected in *Jiban Smriti* , where with great artistic imaginative skill, sketches his own presence in Tagore's life. He could even imagine himself drawing *Alpona*⁶ in Tagore's marriage. This indulgence is crucial because specific aspects of filmmaking process and that of adaptation is also handled by Rituparno Ghosh in his tribute to Tagore in this documentary called *Jiban Smriti* . His understanding on adaptation or translation gets

merged with Tagore's understanding in this documentary. Justifying his position as an auteur in the adaptation process, he opts to begin *Jiban Smriti* with the following line from Tagore's autobiography "who paints these pictures on the canvas of our memories? But whoever it is, it is pictures that he paints. He doesn't wait brush in hand to record every exact detail. He is selective, dropping some changing others, moving backward and forwards in time with ease. In fact he is an artist not a historian". He is clear enough in his subtitle that, it is a documentation of selections made by the artist. Adaptation of Tagore's autobiography and that too in the format of a documentary gave him the scope to reveal his own understanding on the process of adaptation. This documentary which was scheduled to be released in 2012 can be marked as his claim on having been deeply influenced by Tagore. In Ray's adaptations as in Rituparno Ghosh's, viewers can easily locate the impression of an admirer of Tagore and a learner who tries to learn from the master. Satyajit Ray said ".... I Know I have made a story by Tagore into film. It is an interpretation, a transcreation, not a translation. Without Tagore there would be no *Charulata*. After all, he set me off; he was the reason for it. There is a lot of the original in the film a certain state of mind which the author describes beautifully with words... you can't do that in films. You have to use a different method. Tagore is a great poet, a great writer. He uses wonderful language to describe loneliness and all small things that go on in the mind. All the time, you have to find something for *Charulata* to do to establish her state of mind. This is the challenge of the cinema."⁸ So it may be said that adaptations attempted by Satyajit Ray and after that by Rituparno Ghosh carries a lot more than simply following the storyline of the original. In the same line, Rituparno Ghosh can also be credited to have transcreated, rather than simply translated the original text in his adaptations. In adaptations he has carefully handled the old story to fit into a new idea and it is natural that his attempts gathered both praise and criticism. In the present study these praises and criticisms are taken into consideration while analyzing four most talked about adaptations of Rituparno Ghosh. For doing so Rituparno Ghosh and his growth as an artist has already been discussed in the very first chapter leaving room for discussion on those films which are literary adaptations.

Knowing the fact that adaptation is a specific area of discussion, there has been a basic reflection on the adaptation process, its complexities and its acceptance. Though the term adaptation is a vast area of discussion, here it has been concised for having an analysis of Rituparno Ghosh's select adaptations. These adaptations are chosen for getting a better understanding on what is Rituparno's take on literature and its inclusion in films.

Rituparno's adaptation of Tagore's *Noukadubi*, *Chokher Bali*, and *Chitrangada* and O' Henry's *Gift Of the Magi* – as *Raincoat* are critically acclaimed and commercially successful films. *Chokher Bali* appeared in 2003, *Raincoat* appeared in 2004, *Noukadubi* in 2010, and *Chitrangada* in 2012. All these productions claim serious attention, as they are basically adaptations and are part of the most mature phase of Rituparno's career as a filmmaker. These films are chosen for bringing out many issues related to the process of adaptation and Rituparno's contribution in it. Here Rituparno is an auteur, who is expected to play an important role in making essential additions and deletions in the literary piece on which the film is based. Thereby the study attempts to analyse Ghosh's fidelity to the original text while maintaining his position as an auteur.

Chokher Bali: The Passion Play⁹

To begin chronologically *Chokher Bali : The Passion Play* is the first adaptation to be discussed. This film of Rituparno is adapted from Tagore's novel with the same name. *Chokher Bali* is one of the most important novels of Rabindranath Tagore and it is often claimed that this novel was published in the year 1903. In the novel Tagore dealt with the theme of love, betrayal, desire, friendship, ego and deceit. While adapting this novel of Tagore into film, Rituparno couldn't avoid any of these. Both in Tagore's novel and in Rituparno's film it is a tale of complexities of man-woman relationship where the story is set in 19th century India. When, for Tagore, it was a story that could talk about his time, for Rituparno it is a story that talks about the situation of 19th century India

but he has to present it for 21st century audience. This is the reason why it demands a lot of effort from the auteur.

It is the story of Binodini, a young, beautiful and educated widow. Binodini, the protagonist of Tagore's novel and the heroine of Rituparno's film, is a woman of exquisite beauty who lives in Barasat, a small village in Bengal. Binodini's marriage proposal came for Mahendra, but Mahendra without a second thought rejects that proposal and marries Ashalata. On the other hand Binodini is married off to another man who dies immediately after their marriage. After the death of her husband, Binodini's life gets confined inside the four walls of her house, where she is destined to lead a life of a widow. Her life takes a new turn when Rajalaxmi, a wealthy relative invites her to live with them in Kolkata. In Kolkata, Binodini meets Mahendra, who once rejected her for marriage and thus she had to marry someone else who died soon after their marriage. This is the reason why Binodini could not bear the blissful married life of Mahendra and Ashalata. With some adverse feelings in her mind she throws herself in the fire of jealousy, destroying the married life of Mahendra. Here it has to be added that Binodini could ruin the marital life of Mahendra because he could not resist himself from the alluring clutch of Binodini. On the other hand Behari, the best friend of Mahendra, often remains in dilemma as at times, he feels himself siding with Binodini and at times cannot resist himself to hate her for what she is doing with Ashalata. Further the turmoil caused in the lives of the four characters leaves the story unresolved where Mahendra cannot control his senses being bewitched by Binodini, Ashalata remains aloof in her agony, Behari finds himself in such a situation where he cannot decide his understanding over the whole situation and it was too late for Binodini in realizing her true love for Behari and thus leaves for Banaras for repenting her sin.

The story of Tagore's novel to a large extent remains the same in Rituparno's film. Here it appears that within the same story narrative is different. The narrative of the film appropriates as a cinematic rendition of the novel for the 21st century audience. The set, costume, accessories, ornaments, setting and other minute details are designed

after proper study to fit into the period in which the story is told . In spite of such inclusions, the film is structured in such a manner that the auteur gets his space to make it his own. The narrative of the film has provided the scope to the auteur to claim *Chokher Bali* as a story retold after Tagore. Rituparno has given it a new life with variation added to the original. He has reinterpreted the novel to move ahead from that position where Tagore stopped.

In Tagore's novel readers get a less confident Binodini and a much vulnerable Ashalota. This vulnerability and the lack of confidence of the two central characters in this novel is in a way representative of the nature of women of that time ie.19th C. But Tagore was much ahead of his time “ in his conception of Binodini, the young widow who is majestically rebellious in the sense that she does not distrust herself. She refuses to conform to the norms a widow is forced to adhere to . Apparently she is a dutiful widow; she wears a white sari; she lives on a diet of sunned rice and ghee. But deep within she is subversive.”¹⁰ To write about a character like Binodini , was like getting into the wave of reformist movement of his time. Thus it is to be considered that when Hindu society was still fighting with its prejudices about widow remarriage, Tagore was writing about sexual desire of a widow in his novel. Such brave attempt was obviously a glimpse of many reformist movements that were taking place for improving the condition of women and widows in the society. After many such efforts widow remarriage was legalized in the year 1856. Even after such legalization of widow remarriage, Hindu society was not free from its inhibitions. Thus being a Bramho, he decided not to play with the emotions and sentiment of Hindu's of that time. For this reason in *Chokher Bali* , Tagore places the character of Binodini in the exact situations as Hindu society demanded .Tagore was forced by his editors to re-write the conclusion of the novel which shows Binodini's repentance. Tagore was deeply dissatisfied with this kind of moral conclusion that he was forced to give to the story . He regretted the ending of the novel and Rituparno's film *Chokher Bali* starts with these regretful words of Tagore “Ever since *Chokher Bali* was published, I have always regretted the ending .

I ought to be censured for it”¹¹. Thereafter, changing the end of the novel in the film, Rituparno Ghosh admits “Today, when you read the novel, you can make out that this cannot be the ending. A lot of people wanted Binodini to get married to Behari. I think that would have been a solution 30 years ago when people were propagating widow remarriage, they would have been content if she were given another marital home. But in Today’s time, I think a woman can live on her own completely.”¹²

Rituparno Ghosh’s mastery over the cinematic language of the film and his position as an auteur of the 21st Century has given him the scope to transcend the bindings Tagore was forced into as a writer of the 19th Century. But the space where he has halted is Tagore’s voice on gender issue in the novel.

Chakravarty writes in his article *Relocating Tagore’s Binodini: New spaces of representation in Rituparno Ghosh’s Chokher Bali* “ Tagore’s text surely provides an alternative space where the contradictions within the discourses on gender are exposed. The silences in the text are, therefore, most significant in enabling posterity to look for a dynamic model for differentiating between interpleated subject positions and marginal consciousness.”¹³ Rituparno has captured this voice of Tagore and tried to appropriate his understanding of this novel through this film. In appropriating Tagore in his film, he differs in many aspects. Wimal Dissanayake writes, “Ghosh’s adaptation of Chokher Bali is marked by interesting departures from the original novel..... Ghosh’s Binodini comes across as being far more aggressively independent minded and assertive, compared to Tagore’s. she makes use of her widowhood as a site for acquisition of agency and encourages other widows to ignore long standing taboos such as abstaining from drinking tea. This is an intentional move on the part of Ghosh as a film-maker to underline the plight of women and the compelling need for acquisition of agency. Compared to the novel, there is a greater emphasis on physical intimacy and physical aggressiveness, underscoring the repressed sexual desire of widows and its unbearable agony. At times, unlike in the book, Binodini initiates the currents of eroticism.”¹⁴ Wimal goes on to point out many other differences between the text and the film. He

stresses on Ghosh's use of Space while dealing with the idea of self- articulation in film narrative " Ghosh pays close attention to what are to be included in and excluded from his cinematic space and how are they situated in relation to diverse spatial axes of the frame"¹⁵. Apart from Ghosh's brilliant use of space on screen , Wimal talks about Ghosh's idea of freedom " the capacity of consciousness to investigate into its own powers and potentialities"¹⁶ because of which " the protagonist is unafraid to make choices"¹⁷ and this freedom of choice ultimately triggers the ending of the film , which is the intended leap for the director. According to Wimal , with this ending Ghosh has justified his idea of freedom of choice. Here Binodini has made his ultimate choice of not going under any male control. Thus she rejects both Mahendra and Behari. It is again Ghosh's choice which allows Binodini not to repent. This freedom of choice is intentionally given to Binodini by the director. In an interview with Kaustav Bakshi, Rituparno, himself has affirmed this liberty....

Kaustav Bakshi , "I think that the liberty you took with Chokher Bali was more admirable . your Binodini is iconoclasticbecause she mostly speaks through her body. She doesn't subscribe to the patriarchal construct of the woman.

Rituparno replies " yes. And the rebellion she puts up is symbolized by the repetitive use of colour 'red'. 'Red' is not just the colour of passion ; it's also the colour of revolt in *Chokher Bali*." ¹⁸

Thus Rituparno has clearly stated that his Binodini is rebellious in nature and this rebellion which ultimately comes from making independent choices is symbolized by him with the colour 'Red'. This symbolized rebellion is marked by Binodini's position as a widow, who takes English tuition, eats chocolate, drinks tea , attempts to wear jewellery and even a red blouse. She can challenge both Mahendra and Behari with her scientific approach . Thus in one instance she laughs loud when reminding the fear stricken Mahendra about her husband's spleen disease and in another she challenges

Behari with her reference to Jagadish ch. Bose's discovery of life in plants. Thus Kaustav Bakshi has rightly said,

Binodini completely upsets the moral paradigm in which Ashalata or Rajlakshmi were so far comfortably contained. It is this sense that she is different , a rebel in true sense of the term.”..... “ Ghosh , therefore , felt the need to modify Tagore's ending . Ghosh's Binodini does not repent as against Tagore's Binodini who leaves for Kashi apologizing to Mahendra and Ashalata, thereby eliminating the anxiety for the master less widow . Ghosh's Binodini is not punished. Significantly enough, she does not remarry when Behari relents to accept her as a wife. Perhaps she does not want to be rescued by a man; she leaves behind the narrow boundaries of the home to embrace the larger politics of the nation.¹⁹

Thus Binodini gets a fresh start in Rituparno's film . The ending of this film is the mark of this new beginning . Though the ending of the film is a deviation from the original text still it has redefined the image of a woman with the possibility of a bold attitude .

These kinds of deviation from the original novel is also pointed out by Dr Ankita Khanna, in her article *Chokher Bali : From Page to Screen*. She argues ,

The relationship of Binodini and Rajlakshmi are cordial throughout the novel and irrespective of the fact that the former establishes an illegal relationship with the latter's son , the relationship does not stain. But the movie has different version of this liaison. The novel depicts Asha's slipshod ways, her imperfections and her inability to perform household chores. She could never find place in the heart of her mother-in-law due to her unskilled ways of doing things. The movie on the other hand shows Asha as a simple and naïve girl and an average skilled lady and her clumsiness is not emphasized.²⁰

She even points out the way Rituparno has presented a normalized relation between Asha and Behari. In the film Asha and Behari's relation is only once highlighted by Ghosh but in the novel there is a very vivid description of their relation which is again pinpointed with Mahendra's accusations of a kind of inclination both of them have towards each other. Apart from this the major deviation can be identified in Rituparno's portrayal of the relation between Binodini and Rajlaxmi " Binodini in the novel attracts Rajlakshmi , Mahendra's mother towards her, by her hard work and sincerity towards house hold chores which was expected of the women in those days . However , Rituparno's Binodini manages to lure Rajlakshmi by smuggling a cup of tea every evening in her room, as tea was a forbidden drink for widows."²¹

On the other hand in Rituparno's imagination the Character of Ashalota has got some strength. As pointed out earlier she is not whimsical rather she is naïve. Most importantly Rituparno's Ashalota has got the courage to leave Mahendra's house once she manages to understand the relationship between Mahendra and Binodini. Unlike Tagore , Rituparno's Ashalota returns home only after the news of Rajlaxmi's death. She is a changed Ashalota , with much dignity and self respect. It can be said that along with Binodini , Rituparno has also handled the character of Ashalota with much importance and thus has tried to provide new shade to it. Though , in this film too Ashalota is a victim of deceit and betrayal but here she has got the scope to handle her life with much control and strength. She is not pitied all the time. Her character is presented in contradiction to Binodini ; she is naïve because she is brought up to be conditioned as a puppet amidst patriarchal norm. She is made to believe in every bondage , every restriction , every control prescribed for a girl in an utterly patriarchal society. Still Rituparno's Ashalota manages to come out with her own decision.

With these deviations Rituparno has re-visioned Tagore's story . In a way he has redefined most of the characters and reinterpreted most of the situations from the novel. With Rituparno Tagore's text is retold in a visual ecstasy. Amitava Nag claims, "If

Charulata by Ray is an all time great movie of the world , Ghosh's Chokher Bali will remain a fitting adaptation of one of Tagore's modernist novels"²²

In this adaptation , Rituparno will also be remembered for his beautiful use of music. In this film he has not only adapted Tagore's literary text but also used his songs. Tagore's songs or *Rabindra Sangeet* are used in such a manner that they may get fused with the narrative . The retro feeling is enhanced with situational use of songs. Unlike a typical Bollywood musical , Rituparno's use of songs are like an essential part of the total narrative of the film. His selection of songs and its articulation is fused with Tagore's style with western elements. As the narrative of the film is told in the backdrop of British colonial rule in India thus its music also incorporates its influence. In an interview with Asia society Rituparno said,

The entire music in *Chokher Bali* is taken from Tagore songs; they are basically the Tagore interludes playing, but you can just see the largeness of the music, sense its depth and texture, and the influence of the Western classical tradition.

Also I think the classical qualities of *Chokher Bali* were accentuated by the music. This is something people who have not read Tagore miss out on: he has written an opera about these four characters in *Chokher Bali*, which is almost the same, and that forms the musical text of the film. The title music, for instance [hums] is taken from there. These four men and women, all indulging in a love play, together with a group of almost ethereal singers, it's like *Midsummer Night's Dream*, or an oracle, like the Greek chorus, they all sing the emotions and they see what they are doing. They come on stage and almost pre-tell you the story, the events that will follow.²³

Thus for Rituparno there is a musical text of the film. This musical text moves equally with the narrative of the film. The love play of the four central characters of the

film is elevated with the music used in the film. As claimed by Rituparno , music occupies the role of chorus in this film . It is like pre telling the story so that audiences can follow the narrative in its progression. The emotional heights, sentiments and untold suffering of the characters are intimated through the music in this film. The novel of Tagore and its narrative is given a telling effect with the proper use of music. The music of this film is an agent through which Rituparno's efficient understanding as an auteur is revealed. In this adaptation Tagore's text is rethought, re-visualised, and re-narrated by this auteur. Through music, proper editing, lighting and cinematography Rituparno's *Chokher Bali* has become a milestone for other filmmaker's to follow. Like Ray's *Charulata*, Rituparno's *Chokher Bali* can be read to explore Rituparno's expertise as a filmmaker and as an auteur. In this adaptation the fidelity issue is handled through his uncanny effort to think Tagore from a different angle . Audiences are provided with the same text with a difference . Such an effort can also be seen in his another project *Noukadubi*. In *Noukadubi* too Rituparno has dealt with a Tagore's novel . Through this film Rituparno's fascination to explore more on Tagore's creative world finds a new way out. Tagore's presence is recreated in the cinematized narrative of his own text. within his projects of adaptation *Noukadubi* is innovative in many aspects. So the next adaptation chosen for this study is *Noukadubi : The Ship Wreck / Kashmakash* .

Noukadubi: ²⁴

Noukadubi is another adaptation by Rituparno Ghosh. In this adaptation Rituparno has taken up yet another novel of Rabindranath Tagore as a source text. For this film he has chosen Tagore's novel of the same name. As Rituparno had to make this film in two languages , he chose the title *Noukadubi* for the Bengali version and *Kashmakash* for the Hindi version. In both the versions of the film Rituparno has tried to keep the story line of the original text . It is obvious that as the novel is adapted into a totally different medium, variation seems unavoidable. Within the limited time frame Rituparno Ghosh has tried to do justice with the original story of Tagore. Within the

purview of the given text for this adaptation, viewers can realize Rituparno's uniqueness in handling the story. While dealing with the story of Tagore, he found those ways through which he could move into the story to bring out new possibilities of telling it through his film. This ability provided him the opportunity to claim the film as a narrative told through his directorial point of view.

For this film Rituparno was commissioned by Subhas Ghai, a Mumbai based filmmaker. In this film Ghosh has adapted Tagore's novel *Noukadubi* to narrate a story of Dickensian mistaken identity. Subhas Ghai had a faith that such a story will definitely appeal to the masses. Rituparno's adaptation appears to be the perfect creative venture through which this faith of Subhash Ghai is kept. Thus Sangeeta Dutta writes

In 2010, Bombay filmmaker Subhash Ghai commissioned Ghosh to make a bilingual version of Tagore's novel *Noukadubi/ Kashmakash* (Boat Wreck.2010). He agreed with the producer that this plot driven , Dickensian tale of mistaken identity would appeal for the masses, although he was not particularly fond of the novel, the project again offered the challenge of a period film, which Ghosh 's creative team would delight in handling . Shot between Kolkata and Banaras , the film captures the period in intricate detail and characters in fleshed out performances .²⁵

Sangeeta Dutta's remark has incorporated some of the reasons for selecting this particular novel of Tagore for the film. It has an attractive plot, a period film setup, and most importantly it has a scope to deal with complex social issues. This particular novel of Tagore has ample scope to inspire any director and Rituparno is one of those. In *Adapting , interpreting and Transcreating Rabindranath Tagore's works on Screen* Somdatta Mandal writes, "as the narrative makes clear, *Noukadubi* is the most cinema friendly story by Rabindranath Tagore. It has elements of mainstream Indian cinema filled with dramatic coincidences, love triangles, an accident and even a villain. It is not surprising therefore that film directors have gone back to it over and over ."²⁶ Somdatta

Mandal adds to say that Tagore's story is influential on Rituparno as "it had risen eyebrows during Tagore's lifetime for its freewheeling slant, it inspired Ghosh to adapt it. Almost Shakespearean in its premise and plotting, Tagore's *Noukadubi* explores mistaken identities leading to misunderstandings and an exchange of wives."²⁷

The challenge of a period film is taken up by the director in its virility. Tagore's text is cinematized in a period film setup to match up with the requirement of the text. The period is captured in its detail to recreate the essence of the time and its values. Within a period film set up this story is narrated by Rituparno Ghosh with all its intricacies and confusions. Within this film the story of mistaken identities is told with the proper utilization of the characteristics of the period through character portrayal, detailing of furniture's and music and even with costume designs. So here characters are given their particular look, furniture are used with their detailed crafted design, costumes are prepared to carry the influence of the particular time in which the story is going to be told. Here it must be confirmed that it is not simply Tagore's story that has been revived in this film rather it is also his opinion, his philosophy which is revived through this adaptation. Like many other films of Rituparno, in *Noukadubi* too "Ghosh's *Rabindrik* or Tagorean sensibility went beyond the use of specific texts. It was a way of validating Tagore's philosophy in contemporary time."²⁸

Like Tagore's novel, in this film too, viewers are provided with the story of four individuals, i.e. Hemnalini, Ramesh, Kamala or Sushila and Nalinaksha. Hemnalini is the only daughter of Annada Babu. Hemnalini is in love with Ramesh, a learned gentleman. When Ramesh prepares to get married to Hemnalini, a letter from his father comes, in which his father requests him to immediately reach his ancestral house. Without informing Hemnalini, Ramesh sets off to his village. On reaching there he discovers that his father had already settled his marriage to Sushila. Being forced by his father and by Sushila's mother he accepts the proposal with a heavy heart. On the way back home after marriage, Ramesh's boat is struck in a storm. After the shipwreck,

Ramesh searched a lot for his bride. He found an unconscious body of a bride. Mistaking her as for his wife , he carried this lady to his home. On the other hand Hemnalini feels betrayed in love and shifts her attention to music and song. After getting the news of Ramesh's marriage she assumed the end of her love story. As the story progresses Ramesh finds that the lady with whom he is leading a married life is not his wife. Thus without letting her know Ramesh decides to search for her husband. In the midst of his search Sushila or now Kamala gets to know the truth. Knowing the truth about everything she jumps into the Ganges. Eventually she is rescued by a man in the Ghats of Ganges and is shifted to Nalinaksha's home. When Kamala reach Nalinaksha's home, in Benaras , Hemnalini has already entered into his life. Towards the conclusion Kamala realizes that Nalinaksha is her lost husband and thus she is accepted in his home.

On the superficial level the film narrates the story of Tagore. But there are variations in the story in different levels. These differences between the novel and the film, points out those areas where Rituparno has left his mark. From the comparison of the film with the novel of Tagore some striking differences come to the surface . Some of such differences between the novel and the film are mentioned below:

- In Tagore's novel Ramesh is attracted to Kamala unlike the film where Ramesh's feeling for Hemnalini doesn't allow him to feel any attraction towards Kamala.
- Unlike the film , Tagore's text shows that Ramesh's feelings towards Hemnalini rejuvenates once he realizes that Kamala is not his wife.
- In Tagore's text Ramesh's desire is not certain. On the other hand in Rituparno's film Ramesh has a very strong opinion on what he desires.
- In the film Ramesh tries to remain chaste because he loves Hemnalini , but in the book Ramesh is often confused with his desire.
- In the novel Kamala contemplates suicide but in the film she literally jumps into the river and then rescued by a man on the Ghats of Kashi.

- In the film even after reaching out to her real husband Nalinaksha , Kamala can not control her emotion for Ramesh .
- Rituparno has knitted the story in such a manner that here for Kamala Nalinaksha despite being her real husband is unknown but Ramesh is much known to her though he simply played the role of her husband.

These differences are essentially making it clear that the film is based on Tagore's story but with a lot of difference. Through such differences, the film has got a total new identity. Out of the story of Tagore, Rituparno has tried to dig out the true meaning of home for a woman in the patriarchal setup of the society. Through this film Rituparno comes up with his critique on the very institution of marriage. Though Tagore also intended to write on these issues but his take was a bit different from Rituparno's. To understand this difference Tagore's preface to *Naukadubi* can be of great help. Tagore writes in the Preface to *Noukadubi* : “ The deep- rooted belief in the performance of bonding with the husband – is so deep rooted in the mind of the common girl of our country that they can tear the unconscious ties of first love with a sense of shame . But there can be no universal answer to questions like these. This traditional deep rooted social custom in a particular girl's mind may be so profound that it is not impossible that having heard of her unfamiliar husband she can tear all familiar relations and rush towards him.”

If the term ‘Common Girl’ refers to Kamala , then it is pretty much evident that she can tear the unconscious bond of her first love with Ramesh, with a sense of shame. On the other hand this girl is expected to tear all familial relation with Ramesh, once he gets the news of her original , unfamiliar husband. In Tagore's novel this is how Kamala is expected to behave. But in Rituparno's *Noukadubi* , Kamala's feelings are more humane in nature. She is not that much a passive character as that of Tagore's heroine. Here she can reasonably think , judge and ask question . Rituparno's Kamala cannot stop

thinking about Ramesh even after she is taken as a bride in Nalinaksha's home. The sense of shame is not realized by Rituparno's Kamala. She is even unable to tear all familial relation with Ramesh and thus she jumps into the river Ganges. She did not go out from Ramesh's home to search for her original husband. At the end of the film too Kamala is shown to have concern and care for Ramesh, at this time she wants to explain to Ramesh what is true and what is false for her in this institution of marriage. In this sense Rituparno's *Noukadubi* projects his own sensibility as an auteur. Tagore's story is given a new soul in this adaptation. Tagore's novel is thus a source through which Rituparno attempts to hold on to the struggle of a woman to achieve a static identity and to get a home of her own. With this story, Rituparno has uncovered different layers of the concept of marriage and a woman's position in it.

Within the different perspective of the auteur through which Tagore's novel is adapted, characters are structured with strikingly particular features. When Hemnalini is given a very aristocratic look, Kamala is given a very naïve look. The contrast between Hemnalini and Kamala is very much clear. Hemnalini is educated, but Kamala is not. Hemnalini can speak out her desire, her wish and her aspiration but Kamala is muted, she suffers a lot to express her desire. Kamala is a bit helpless and does not hesitate to commit suicide on the other hand in her depression Hemnalini can easily find solace in music and in her books. With these differences Rituparno Ghosh has highlighted the necessity of education for the emancipation of woman. Education and knowledge can really provide strength and this strength is focused in most of the characters, Ramesh is an advocate, Nalinaksha is a doctor, Hemnalini reads a lot of Tagore and Kamala could read the truth in the news paper only for her education in the convent school.

Introduction of Tagore as a character in this film is an important aspect of it. Tagore's presence is felt in the narrative at many levels. Tagore becomes a part of his own story. Tagore is presented to be a part of the changes made by the auteur. Audiences are provided with the image of a much younger Tagore, whom Hemnalini

aspires to get married with. Rituparno's inclination towards Tagore is satisfied with Hemnalini's desire. With Hemnalini's inclination towards Tagore, once again Rituparno has reminded his viewers about the influence of Satyajit Ray on his work. Thus, "if Charulata was a fan of Bankimchandra. Hemnalini worships Tagore. Introducing Tagore as a character in his own text is a masterstroke of the director."³⁰ Tagore's character is a source of inspiration for Hemnalini. Even this character of Tagore is a rival for Ramesh, as Hemnalini seems to give enough importance to Tagore's writings and his songs. Ramesh realizes that Hemnalini's love is shared with Tagore. Thus Richard Allen writes "the figure of Tagore is central to *Noukadubi*, and his presence is woven into the portrayal of the relationship between Ramesh and Hem and the articulation of unrealized desire. At the beginning of the film, Ramesh recognizes that he has a rival for Hem's love, which is none other than the handsome Rabindranath Tagore himself whose picture adorns her room and Hem tells her sympathetic father that she would marry Tagore were it not for the fact that he is already married."³¹ It is not simply the image of Tagore that has carried attention in this film, rather Tagore's songs are extensively used in this film. Songs of Tagore are used to focus on the crucial moves of the narrative. These songs are used to express the mood of the characters. The desire, passion, wait, and suffering of both Hemnalini and Kamala are expressed with the help of the chosen lyric. Rituparno has chosen those songs which are appropriate in providing a base to narrate the happenings in the life of the characters in the film. The meaning and the meaninglessness of the term home is expressed through the song *Khela Ghor Badhte legeche*. Through this song Rituparno has relentlessly claimed that the term home or *Ghor* is so fragile that it can be compared to a play house, a *Khela Ghor*, which can shatter once the play is over. There is no reference to a stable home, instead by the use of this song the stability of the meaning of the home is dismantled. The fake stability of marriage and home is questioned through this song. "Amongst the overlapping Tagore songs that seem to interfere into the narrative, *Khela Ghor* and *Tori Amar* serve their purpose by emphasizing on the fragility and make belief stability of Marriage / home."³² *Tori Amar* is also a song which intensifies the shaky identity of women in a patriarchal

society. It is often believed that women get a home and a stable identity after marriage. This particular belief is questioned by Rituparno in this film. With the twist and turn of the story Rituparno has narrated the crude reality of a woman's identity and this truth is heightened by the use of the song *Tori amar*. The term *Tori* which means 'boat' is used as a motif in the narrative. This *Tori* always remains in a state of uncertainty; it floats to reach either of the banks of a river. Its destination is decided by its controller just as the life of a woman which is also controlled by the man in her life. The boat of her life is in a constant uncertainty to reach its destination . If the destination or her home itself is a constructed make belief then her identity must have to be in a flux.

The purpose of using these selected songs by Tagore can be read at many levels. Songs are being repeatedly used by Rituparno Ghosh in his films. Thus in *Noukadubi* his use of songs are not any exceptions. Like other movies here too his thoughts are well communicated with these songs. In a way these songs written by Tagore has enabled him to fuse his thoughts his arguments with that of Tagore's. Specifically when he has adapted Tagore's text, these songs are like ladders to rise up to the world of literature through his cinematic capabilities. The vital questions once taken up by Tagore through his literary text are carried forward through the cinematic text. Rituparno is not simply carrying forward the essential questions of the text but also is trying to find out newer possibilities to answer these questions. In this regard the auteur has taken the help of Tagore's lyrics.

Using songs and music is not essentially new in the medium of film. In this regard Rituparno has followed a very old tradition of using music and songs in film. From the very old time of dramatic performances songs and music were used. Thus Aparna Bhattacharyya writes " Songs and music have been a part of performances from ancient times, when songs were sung in religious ceremonies . Music was a very important part of early liturgical drama where the full resources of medieval ecclesiastical establishments were available for itthroughout the middle ages music

and drama frequently work in unanimity.”³² Songs and music were not only the part of the tradition of drama during medieval time thus after referring to the use of music and songs in drama’s from the time of Aristotle, Bhattacharyya has emphasised that Shakespeare also used music in his productions. Thus she says “ Shakespeare used music and song to support the tone and mood of his plays.”³³ Here in Rituparno’s case, his narrative in the film is boosted with the use of lyrics. Here, the ‘tone’ and the ‘mood’ of the film is enhanced and supported with Tagore’s lyrics. Most importantly, for Rituparno, music is a medium, through which he is successful in bringing the essence of Tagore into the film. In this adaptation Tagore’s presence is doubled with the music used in it. The idealized image of Rabindranath Tagore is made visible through the picture hung in Hemnalini’s room and through the songs she sings. The upper class Bengali household with its essential element of music and books are projected through Hemnalini’s dialogues and through the projection of her obsession with Tagore . It is very much evident in the film that “If Hem imagines herself to be a lover of Tagore , her songs , living in the mind of Ramesh , casts Ramesh himself in the role of Tagore. This suggestion is made explicit in the film”³⁴ Here it is very much important to notice Rituparno’s effort to use Tagore as a content. Tagore as a content is used in many levels. After using his songs as an essential trope used in the narrative. Tagore’s presence can be felt through the character of Ramesh . Ramesh is equated with Tagore through Hemnalini’s love and obsession with Tagore. For Hemnalini Tagore is a married man whom she can only aspire as devotee on the other hand her love for Ramesh is also shaped in aspiration after his marriage. For Hemnalini love is distanced through marriage. As Tagore is beyond her reach so is Ramesh. In the narrative of the film as well as in the novel this distance in love occurs with the institution of marriage specifically with the system of prearranged marriage. In such a system , marriage is always the culmination of the decision made by others. This decision does not involve love. So whether it is Kamala, or Hemnalini , love remains unresolved. For Ramesh and Nalinaksha too love is distanced through marriage. For Ramesh and Nalinaksha , the journey through marriage is a bit different from that of Kamala and Hemnalini. Though

Hemlata is not married but the impact of Ramesh's marriage can be felt in her life. It is Ramesh's marriage with Kamala which shattered Hemnalini's dream and her love. Ramesh tried to arrange a home for Hemnalini with all essential furniture's to greet her arrival as a bride but after his marriage that home is occupied by kamala. So with marriage the meaning of home also alters. For Kamala it is again a more shifting meaning of home and love that accompanies marriage. Within the long knitted incidents occurred in her life that begins with marriage , she finds herself in utter confusion . The true meaning of love and home is beyond her understanding. Her venture reveals the truth that through marriage she only got the places she lived in and the person she lived with. She negotiates through different challenges of her life like many other women. This negotiation becomes a part of her vehicle of survival. Her identity is crushed under such negotiations. Even her name is not static as it has to undergo changes. Along with her surname her identity shuffles. In Sushila's case even her name is not given value, with a different name she is accepted in Ramesh's home and even in Nalinaksha's home. She is called with two names Sushila and Kamala. Through this adaptation of Tagore's *Noukadubi* " Rituparno intensifies the questions raised by the novel, that of the stability of the concepts of home and marriage. The film singly focuses on the negotiations that occurs in the life of a woman through, what she believed to be her marriage , that transforms her from Kamala to Sushila and then again the negotiation towards being a different Kamala by painfully eliminating her brief and happy identity as Sushila."³⁵

Therefore, through this adaptation of Tagore's novel *Rituparno* has claimed his space in the text recreated in this film. Appropriating the essence of the source text *Rituparno's* has stated out quest to deal with some vital issues of a woman's life. Translation of Tagore's texts has opened up a door to peep into the darker aspect of the marginalized section of the society whom we call as women. Their marginal identity is revealed through the woman protagonists of the film. This marginality is marked with the challenge of supporting a woman with a fixed and particular identity. It is specifically a subject that has been taken up by *Rituparno* in other films too. But

Chitrangada, The Crowning wish is counted as the most talked about film on the issue of identity. Thus the next adaptation chosen for discussion and analysis is *Chitrangada: The Crowning Wish*.

Chitrangada:³⁶

If it is to be believed that we all are stories , then there are stories that we tell, stories that we believe and stories that we ignore. Through films , stories are often revisited and are retold. Why they are retold is another issue but in Rituparno's case it is very clear that he tells stories to revisit those aspects which were ignored. When these ignored aspects of stories are reclaimed, then it becomes a statement. In this regard Rituparno has his expertise to bring back old stories to tell them for contemporary audience. In this sense it may be said that he is classical as well as contemporary, because in his hand classic and contemporary ideas get a complete whole.

In *Chitrangada : The Crowning Wish* , Rituparno Ghosh has taken the story line from Tagore's dance drama *Chitrangada*. In this film he has very technically handled the original text of Tagore. After justifying the presence of elements from Tagore's dance drama *Chitrangada* in Rituparno's film Daisy Hasan claims, "It may however be argued that Tagore's text is central to the film, which reflects the drama's liberal impulse to uncover greater queer possibilities."³⁷ This centrality of Tagore can somehow be felt through the narrative of the film. Rituparno Ghosh himself has accepted that he has borrowed heavily from Tagore. In an interview with Sohini Ghosh Rituparno Ghosh himself has explained ,

My film is based on Tagore's interpretation of Chitrangada . The eponymous protagonist is the princess of Manipur, then a place near Orissa. The king of Manipur had received boon from lord Shiva that only male heirs would be born to the family . But boon notwithstanding, Chitrangada is born. The king does not know what to do with a daughter so he brings her up like a boy. Chitrangada grows up to become

consummate in archery, the art of warfare, hunting and the craft of administration. During one of her hunting expeditions she meets Arjun who neither acknowledges her femininity nor her valour. Feeling offended, Chitrangada goes to visit Kamdeva (cupid) who transforms her into a beautiful woman. But when she goes to Arjun , he expresses no interest in her as he has seen many beautiful women . But what he has never seen is a masculine warrior- princess who fought so valiantly. He is haunted by that memory. Chitrangada returns to Kamdeva and asks for her old form to be returned and finally confronts Arjun like an equal. The slant of gender equality was provided by Tagore.” He adds, “My film is a deconstruction of Tagore’s text. Irrespective of our biological sex, gender is frequently imposed upon us. We often have to play out gender-roles that we may not want to. In the film I act as the choreographer who is directing stage performance of *Chitrangada* while rebelling against the body and gender that he has reluctantly inherited....”³⁸

As a queer choreographer, Rudra is expected to see the text in a different perspective. Thus Rudra , the shadow image of Rituparno questions the body language of the characters performing on the stage and calls it as a mal appropriation of the conceptualized image of a body , where male is to be masculine and female has to be feminine. But in this dance drama Chitrangada is masculine on the other hand Rudra is much feminine rejecting the appropriated norm of the performing body and its language on stage. The rebellion of Rudra is registered through his image of a queer choreographer. His rebellion is against the mal appropriation of a self within an unwanted body with a queer twist . It is thus a critique of the body of a performer who needs to confirm to a set norm of a stage , on the other hand it is also a critic of the body confirmed by the society at large to negotiate gender.

As narrated by Rituparno to Sohini Ghosh , in this Film *Chitrangada The Crowning Wish*, he has deconstructed the original story , where Rudra is the protagonist.

The character of Rudra is enacted by Rituparno himself , where he is a choreographer and aims to present Tagore’s dance drama *Chitrangada* on stage. On the sets of *Chitrangada*, Rudra meets Partho. Partho is the percussionist of the theater group, who eventually becomes the center of attraction for Rudra, and then they fall in love with each other. There evolve a very intrinsic relation between them and at one point Rudra decides to adopt a baby. But this decision has to run through too many questions on Rudra’s sexuality, gender and the validity of the relationship between Rudra and Partho. These questions ultimately influence Rudra to go under the knife of a surgeon so that he can alter his identity, sexuality and eventually his gender. After all such efforts Rudra realises that he belongs to different definition of sexuality and can never fall under the set pattern of the heterosexual society , and thus he decides to remain in his betweenness. It is a film which plays with taboos related to body and sexuality. Rudra’s fight to understand his body and beyond that his self is the crux of this film. It is observed that “Noted film-maker Rituparno Ghosh appropriates Rabindranath Tagore’s *Chitrangada* with a telling effect, cinematizing on the dilemma of homosexuals embedded in a society which can’t define desire beyond the body-pleasures negating other identitarian possibilities for which the body is a metaphor. In his film, Ghosh has thoroughly dealt with the issue of homosexuals and anesthetized a vision for a transformation in our outlook. This transformation of outlook can be gained through both education and its transformative power to open vista of more awareness of the body as an epitome of an individuated identity”³⁹ In this narrative it is this lack of awareness which is making the situation difficult for not only Rudra but also for his family. Neither Rudra’s parents nor Partho is getting the clear perspective on Rudra’s decision. Within the set and accepted pattern of heterosexuality, Rudra’s decision of changing his sex is beyond their imagination. These challenges placed before Rudra are crucial which compelled him to ask too many questions to the counselor, who is a mentally created persona of Rudra. These questions are communicated to the audiences in a very subtle manner. It may be said that through this film Rituparno is communicating with the masses on issues that are complicated and beyond the reach of common understanding ,

because “The traditionally sanctioned space of heterosexuality is being increasingly challenged in art and aesthetics today. Homosexuality as a taboo and part of a transgressive space is being negated on basis of both western feminist interventions as much as a neo-liberalist reterritorialization of body and sexuality as a subversive symbol against commoditification of the body as an intrusion into identity of the body, hence of self.”⁴⁰ It is therefore a film where Rituparno Ghosh has dealt with our little known understanding on the dilemma of that self which is trapped inside an unwanted body. It is a venture to relocate an identity that may cross the boundary of social acceptance. It is again a cinematic expression of the agony of those who live against the heterosexual norms of the society. With such intricate layers of understanding of the film , Rituparno has managed to keep the essence of Tagore’s dance drama *Chitrangada*. The interface between the literary text and its cinematic rendering is capable of bringing in huge discussion on how far Tagore is important to Ghosh, and to what extent he has used Tagore’s dance drama .

Rituparno’s *Chitrangada* begins with the following prologue from the original text:

“Pleased by the devotion of the king of Manipur , Lord Shiva granted him the boon that the Royal Family would only bear male children. Even then , when Chitrangada was born to the royal family, the king brought her up like a son.”⁴¹

Rituparno’s use of this prologue justifies his intention of using Tagore’s Dance drama for exploring a narrative on gender. Walking on the footprint of Tagore , Rituparno Ghosh’s adaptation carries forward Tagore’s take on Chitrangada’s quest to dig out her gender identity. It is a cinematic journey to realize Chitrangada’s plight , a royal child who defied the boon of Shiva and was born as a girl but brought up as a boy. Therefore her identity was decided by her father. She was nurtured like a man and was trained as a warrior . In all possible ways she was conditioned to be a man. Thus in one of its scene Rudra shouts at Kasturi, “ Chitrangada is conditioned to be a man, that’s

how she is brought up”. So her gender was determined and constructed by the society. From this point Rituparno’s film takes up the issue, once taken up by Tagore, to its next level. Here he talks about the other possibilities of sexual identity which may cross the known limits of gender variation. So to cope with this the narrative is given many twist and turns , through which Rudra’s journey runs with the journey of Chitrangada. Ultimately this turns to be a story of wish fulfillment both for Chitrangada and Rudra. This journey of wish fulfillment is portrayed through music and dance. In this journey of wish fulfillment , Rituparno takes a lot from Tagore. In his film Tagore is very much present in the first half of the story with the soundtrack *Bodhu Kon Alo Lago Chokhe* , a song from the original dance drama *Chitrangada*. With soundtracks like *Bodhu Kon Alo laglo chokhe* and *guru guru*, the beautifully choreographed dance movements bring in the narrative of Tagore’s *Chitrangada* inside the story of Rudra , the protagonist of Rituparno’s film *Chitrangada :The crowning wish*. When *Guru Guru* is composed to enhance a tribal feeling , *Bodhu Kon Alo laglo Chokhe* is composed with different space and pauses . This kind of composition of Tagore’s song demands a different kind of choreography ,and this demand is fulfilled in this film. *Guru Guru* is played with a theatrical scene where Rudra the choreographer of Tagore’s *Chitrangada* watch the scene where *Chitrangada* is setting off for hunting. The masculinity of Chitrangada is displayed through this hunting scene. But later when Chitrangada comes in contact with Arjuna , and tries to shed her masculine image, the song *Bodhu kon alo laglo chokhe* is used. At this point Rudra’s involvement in a relation with Partho is highlighted with the use of the same song. As the narrative moves, Rudra’s dilemma is equated with the dilemma of Chitrangada. This equated narrative is dominates the first half of the film. In the later part of it , Tagore’s *Chitrangada* is carried with the text of the film with the use of background scores and voice over . Lines from the original text is used through voice over to suggest the transformation taking place both in Rudra and in Chitrangada. When Madan’s role is immensely felt in the transformation of Chitrangada in the dance drama, Rudra’s transformation occurs in the operation theatre and outside it with Dr Shome. Here it must be added that when Rudra is choreographing the dance drama for stage, he

himself appears to be Madan , who is helping Chitrangada to move in the journey of transformation. Thus there is a continuous effort to correlate the text of Tagore with the text of the film in its bits and pieces. When the first half of the film incorporates elements from Tagore's text to a greater extent , the second half of it carries simply the essence of the text to focus more on Rudra's struggle to maintain a balance between his self and body. In this regard Srimati Mukherjee's thought seems to be relevant , as she says "Tagore disappears completely in the second half of *Chitrangada*, as Ghosh contextualizes queer desire and trans sexuality in a day to day lived reality. Although Ghosh continues to use choreographed movements and lines from Tagore's *Chitrangada*."⁴²This continuation of choreographed moves relentlessly involves Tagore's text into the filmic text of Rituparno's Ghosh. The choreography of this film connect it to a different edge of the story of Chitrangada. In a discussion on the film *Chitrangada* arranged by ABP Ananda, Rituparno Ghosh elaborates that from his own reading of Mahabharata he comes to the conclusion that Manipur is the Kalinga of that time as Arjun could reach Manipur through his journey by the sea beach .For this reason Rituparno chose Sharmila an Odissi⁴³ dancer as his choreographer . Odissi with its root in Odissa , can relate to the Tagore's story where Arjuna meets Chitrangada in Manipur . Thus the classical dance form which influenced Rituparno to select Sharmila as the choreographer of the film has its own role to play in this adaptation. On the other hand it is not simply the dance moves that she choreographed in this film rather she is the source , from where Rituparno collected information for playing the role of a choreographer. This role of a choreographer allowed him to celebrate androgyny. Rudra as a dancer could communicate this celebrated androgyny, as dance doesn't have any gender. Here it may be said that along with all the technicalities involved to present the dance drama of Tagore within the framework of the script of this film , Rituparno ghosh is inquisitive to uncover the veil to bring out the unaccepted and hidden truth of the society. This truth is conveyed through many dimensions of the narrative . For Rudra's family it is very hard to accept Rudra's decision of a sex reassignment surgery. Rudra thus accepts the truth that he is a 'perennial embarrassment' but hold on to his decision

as he feels it essential for getting an appropriate identity in the society. On the other hand Rudra finds it difficult to get into a familial life. Rudra is shocked to know that he is not allowed to adopt a baby without a confirmed identity of either a male or a female. This forced him to question his own identity. When Rudra discovers that Partho with whom he wanted to begin a new life, can ditch him and go for a relationship with Kasturi. These ups and downs in Rudra's life forced him to rethink on his own decision . Ultimately he comes closer to the truth with his realization that his identity and gender is beyond the accepted gender variations of this society. So he decides to drop his decision to go under the knife of a surgeon to alter his identity .

Therefore it is the film which basically provides a perspective on heterosexuality or hetero-normativity against homosexuality, “What is called into question here is the distinction between the naturally given , normative self of heterosexuality and the rejected other of homosexuality.”⁴⁴ These issues of hetero-normativity against that of homosexuality is very much prominent in this film as the film came in the very last part of his film career and his life. It is visible that in this later phase of his life his priorities changed and he started voicing out his sexual preference. In his films too he has projected his concern for those who lead a vulnerable life against the accepted norm of a heterosexual society. Deepanjana Pal writes “Rituparno Ghosh was a powerful story teller, challenging us to rethink stereotypefrom 2011, fluid sexuality and transgender identity informed a lot of Ghosh's work , whether it was walking the ramp or acting or direction.”⁴⁵ In films like *Chitrangada:The Crowning Wish*, Ghosh's quest with identity of a transgender is ultimately marked . Here it is necessary to be said that Ghosh could not suddenly come up with this idea, it is the result of a long journey . Kaustab Bakshi has rightly said

Ghosh's films made a mark in launching an acrid critique of hetero – patriarchy, often revealing the reality behind apparently happy marriages, romantic relationships and familial equations.”—“he problematized notions of compulsory heterosexuality and monogamy. His films time and

again question a woman's lack of agency within the hetero patriarchal family and the nation – state at large . His female protagonists struggle hard to throw off the mantle of patriarchal repression often abandoning the seeming security of home and romantic relationships. For instance Ramita (Rituparna Sengupta) in *Dahan* and Binodini in *Chokher Bali* walk out on their respective husband and suitor to discover a life beyond the restrictive boundaries of the home . In his telefilm, *Malatibala Lane* (2006) , the protagonist (Soma Chakraborty), having been rejected by several suitors and maltreated by parents and relatives for failing to impress prospective matches , leaves the home one fine morning in search of his own.”⁴⁶

Thus his quest to deal with the hetero patriarchal society is not something very much new with *Chitrangada*. Time and again he has presented different layers of this hetero patriarchal and hetero normative society through his films, but in *Chitrangada* he has taken a step ahead with his concerns with gender issues. So, this adaptation is crucial, as Ghosh has played with the idea of shame and queerness of the protagonist Rudra , who is placed just against Tagore's *Chitrangada*. The surrounded reality of the term queer is very difficult to explain but Ghosh has dealt with it while he is dealing with Tagore's work. The context of this film and its association with the question of queer performativity is crisscrossing with Tagore's dance drama *Chitrangada*. Rituparno's concern about the term queer is justifying what is explained in the *Dictionary of Critical Theory*. It says “Queer is a synonym for Homosexuals or Gay”⁴⁷. It again added “Masculinity can be demonstrated to be an unstable cluster of fears about effeminacy and repressed homosexual or homo social desires, rather than the ‘simple’ opposite of femininity.”⁴⁸ Under the light of these words it may be understood why Rudra effeminates and how Rudra's appearance invite uttered and unuttered questions from each and every character of the film. Even Kasturi , tries to reject Rudra's appearance as to be not normal. Being a part of the hereto normative world she fails to

understand Rudra's feelings. And in this context it is expected that Partho couldn't handle his relationship with Rudra with proper ease. Ghosh's projection in this film justifies what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has to say in her essay in *Queer Performativity: Henry James's The Art Of The Novel* "the main reason why the self-application of "queer" by activists has proven so volatile is that there's no way that any amount of affirmative reclamation is going to succeed in detaching the word from its association with shame and with the terrifying powerlessness of gender- dissonant or otherwise stigmatized childhood"⁴⁹. She has added "I want to say that at least for certain ("queer") people, shame is simply the first, and remains a permanent, structuring fact of identity: one that has its own, powerfully productive and powerfully social metamorphic possibilities."⁵⁰ For the protagonist of this film Rudra, shame is a permanent structure of identity, he has to face this shame in every step of life. Though he is highly successful still he cannot separate himself from this shame. But the solid structure of shame shatters when Rudra finally decides to stay in his naturally given body abandoning the sex change surgery. Through the character of Rudra, Rituparno Ghosh has redefined Tagore's character Chitrangada. Rudra is courageous to speak about his own sexual preferences, he is much free to claim his own identity than Chitrangada. Chitrangada could never go beyond her limits, she is much controlled a character unlike Rudra, who knows about his dilemma and wants to act on that. when it is a cinematic experience to witness the change in Chitrangada and that in Rudra, it is again a shifting platform where silence is broken to establish new possibilities. This broken silence can be regarded as an anticipation of freedom. Michel Foucault has rightly said "If sex is repressed, that is, condemned to prohibition, nonexistence, and silence, then the mere fact that one is speaking about it has the appearance of a deliberate transgression. A person who holds forth in such language places himself to a certain extent outside the reach of power; he upsets established law; he somehow anticipates the coming freedom."⁵¹. Foucault claims that to some extent sexuality is related to some biological desire but in actuality these biological drives are influenced by some institutions and discourses. For him sexuality is a construct. Rudra's journey in

Chitrangada, *The crowning wish* is a fight against this construct. Through this character Rituparno has foregrounded many aspects of homosexuality in his film. The ideals of masculinity and femininity are upheld to set up an extended, metaphorical sense of these two binary oppositions. We the viewers can identify episodes which convey the existence of homosexuality in the mainstream heterosexual society. For Rituparno sexuality is a vital aspect of determining gender identity. His idea is “ultimately to perpetuate the patriarchal subservience of women’s interest in men’s.”⁵² It is definitely an understanding which needed newer techniques for projection. Thus in *Chitrangada*, Rituparno Ghosh has tried hands in new techniques too that added new dimension to the whole experience of watching a period cinema. Avik Mukhopadhyay, Director of Photography reveals, “with *Chitrangada*, we shifted to digital from celluloid. That was the transition period when cinema was testing out this new tool of expression. We chose digital just not because it was new, but we felt it was necessary to film a kind of narrative. In *Chitrangada*, Ritu started breaking new grounds in terms of storytelling.the narrative of the film floated between real and imaginary spaces and the cinematographic style constantly changed from the theatrical to the cinematic. A continuous shift of space happened between the stage, the home, the hospital. Sometimes, shift of space was created just by lighting.”⁵³ This use of technique has given a great scope to Rituparno for narrating Rudra’s story along with the narrative of *Chitrangada*’s life. The constant shift from one scene to another, from Rudra’s tale to *Chitrangada*’s has provided the space to relate the reality to the screen. Tagore’s dance drama is a part of the cinema and its essence affects the whole of it. The modern understanding on gender and sexuality is somehow dragged from Tagore’s understanding of it. Daisy Hasan observes, “Tagore’s drama unfolds in a particular socio cultural and political context in the early 20th century and has been understood as contributing to the inauguration of a tradition of modern dance. Tagore’s portrayal of *Chitrangada* is in line with his representation of the modern or New woman (*naba nari*) in his other important works.”⁵⁴ After her minute observation on this adaptation Hasan says “In Tagore’s play the narrative still unfolds within a framework of patriarchy and of

‘either –or- choices for Chitrangada who, while she might be liberated from the beauty myth , is still required to prove herself of equal capability to Arjun.’⁵⁵ The concept of patriarchy is taken ahead by Rituparno in this film. The dance drama of Tagore , which is taken up by Rituparno, in its original format of a dance drama to be staged by Rudra , is a base on which Rituparno’s quest of giving a meaning to the queer identity rests. Hasan has rightly said “This film nevertheless accomplishes an ingenious interpretation allegorizing the very act of reading queerly.”⁵⁶ Rituparno’s interpretation , his reading of Tagore’s *ChokherBali* is reaching out to get the understanding on queer sensitivity. In this adaptation Rituparno has cinematized the dance drama of Tagore with beautifully choreographed moves , through which he has generated a hope on the possibility of rejecting the hetero patriarchal norms of the society . Dance moves by Rituparno himself with the intense background music and with proper arrangement of lights guaranteed the viewers to serve a newer way of presenting the old text of Tagore. Specifically the transformation in Rudra, the protagonist of the film is equated with the transformation of Chitrangada , and this transformation takes a beautiful cinematic experience through the choreographed moves on stage . This parallel presentation is an essential part of the film to present the queer reading of Tagore’s dance drama. The struggle of Rudra to handle his queer identity is projected on different level , starting from his home to the world outside. When the dance drama is on its preparation stage , Rudra also prepares for transformation , which includes physical as well as social transformation. Rituparno’s reading of Tagore invites an overall transformation of our understanding on body and that of self .When the dilemma of living inside an unwanted body appears queer , his goal seems to be normalizing it. Here it can be said that *Chitrangada* is an adaptation of Tagore’s dance drama *Chitrangada* and “ it traces a geneology by routing itself through quasi – mythical traditions and an authoritative text like Tagore’s”⁵⁷.

In his adaptation of *Choker Bali*, *Noukadubi* and then *Chitrangada*, Rituparno’s fascination with Tagore’s literary creation comes to the forefront. In all these films he has given a new dimension to the literary works of Tagore. He has appropriated

Tagore's literary texts through the language of cinema. Cinematic adaptation of Tagore's literary work provided him the chance to deconstruct many accepted and normalized norms of the society. Thus Kaustav Bakshi and Parjanya Sen writes in their co written article ' *A Room of Hir Own*' in Tagore's texts *zie* found a powerful rhetoric to dismantle the normative, testified by *hir* repeated use of the poet's compositions in film after film , and in *hir* adaptation of *Chokher Bali*, *Noukadubi* and eventually *Chitrangada*."58 Thus it is very much clear that in all three adaptations analysed above ie. *Chokher Bali*, *Noukadubi* and *Chitrangada* , Tagore holds the central position . Essentially through these three adaptations Rituparno Ghosh has crushed the line of acceptance and normative. The horizon of possibilities is enlarged through these adaptations . Rituparno has claimed his position as an auteur through such adaptations. But his venture through his adaptations does not stop with these three films only.

Thus the last film taken up for analysis is *Raincoat* . *Raincoat* is an adaptation of O' Henry's short story *The Gift of the Magi*. This film is chosen to focus on those areas of adaptation by Rituparno Ghosh where he has departed from Tagore. With *Raincoat* , there is a chance to delve deep into the world of Rituparno Ghosh's cinemas, where literature from any part of the world can be taken as a source text. *Raincoat* is a film which can explain his quality to imbibe essential elements from a text that has a content from a different culture. For this reason the next film to be discussed and analysed is *The Raincoat*.

Raincoat 59

Gift of the Magi is one of the most popular stories of O' Henry. It was published in 1905 in the newspaper *The New York Sunday World* and later it was published in an anthology called *The Four Million* in 1906. It is short story which revolves round mainly two characters Della or Della Dellingham and Jim or Mr. James Dillingham Young. It is a simple story of how a married couple manages to buy Christmas gifts in spite of their difficulties. Jim and Della lives in an apartment with very little money. But they have two most important possession one is Jim's Gold pocket Watch and the other is Della's

long hair. But as the story progresses it appears that both of them are compelled to sacrifice their possessions for buying a Christmas Present. When Della counts that she has only one dollar and 87 cents left, she decides to sell her hair for twenty dollars, and with that money she manages to buy a perfect chain for Jim's Watch. But when Jim gave her the gift Della is shocked to see that it is the pair of combs that she desired. After the confession of Jim it is revealed that he sold his watch to get the money for those combs. Both Della and Jim are in such a situation where they cannot use their gifts but these gifts remain to be the symbol of their love.

This short story of O' Henry is adapted into film by different directors in different languages. This story is adapted with different titles like, *The Sacrifice*, *Love's Surprises are futile*, *The Gift of the Magi*(1917&1958) *Dary Magow*, *Christmas Eve on Sesame Street*, *I'll not be a Gang star love*, *The Gift of Love*, *Mickey's once upon a Christmas*, *Raincoat etc.*

In this present study the adaptation of this story of O'Henry into a film titled as *Raincoat* is taken up. *Raincoat* is a film by Rituparno Ghosh. This film is made in the language, Hindi. This film was released on 24th December 2004. Edited by Arghakamal Mitra, it is a film which runs for 120 minutes. This film which is mostly shot indoor and focuses on the conversation of the hero and the heroine of the film, bagged the national award for best feature film in Hindi. Among other awards this film was nominated for Crystal Globe for the best feature film at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival.

The film is loosely based on O Henry's Short story *The Gift of the Magi*. Initially it appears that the film is inspired by Mithaq Kazimi's film *Through her eyes*. But it proves to be a Rituparno Ghosh film, with its narrative style. The story of this film differs from the source text but it has grabbed the crux of it. It seems that the film carries with it the echo of the authorial voice which narrates the ending of O' Henry's story. At the end of the story the authorial voice narrates----

The Magi , as you Know, were wise men- wonderfully wise men – who brought gifts to the new born King of the Jews. They invented the art of giving Christmas presents. Being wise , their gifts were no doubt wise ones, possibly bearing the privilege of exchange in case of duplication. And here I have lamely related to you the uneventful chronicle of two foolish children in a flat who most unwisely sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house. But in a last word to the wise of these days let it be said that of all who give gifts these two were the wisest. Of all who give and receive gifts, such as they are wisest. Everywhere they are wisest. They are the Magi. ⁶⁰

Such statement of the author directs the story directed to a definite angle. The author tells its readers to equate the intention of Della and Jim with that of the intention of Magi's , when it comes to the issue of giving gifts. He even call them the wisest for their self-sacrificing attitude. This appreciated attitude seems to cover up the whole story. When this story is adapted into a film by Rituparno Ghosh, it is molded in a different shape but the two central characters posses the similar self sacrificing attitude as that of the story. Apart from taking a pinch of the philosophical baggage from the original story the difference between the short story and the film can be counted on many levels

When Nereem Sheikh asked to Rituparno,

In Bengali, is it true that the word for film and book is the same? A number of your films are adaptations of novels and short stories as well. ...

Rituparno answered “Yes it is, the word for film and book is *boi*. But as far as my work is concerned, most of my films have been my own. It is true that *Raincoat* was an adaptation of O' Henry and *Chokher Bali* was a straight Tagore story. But if you have seen *Raincoat*, you see that it is far removed from O' Henry's "The Gift of the Magi." O' Henry's is a short,

three-page story, and it is very different from the story I tell in *Raincoat*. In his story, Jim and Della, husband and wife, buy Christmas gifts for one another: Della has always wanted tortoise-shell combs for her hair, she has extremely long, beautiful, cascading hair, and Jim always wanted a nice chain for his watch. Jim sells his watch and buys the combs, comes home, and sees Della who has cut off her hair to buy the chain for his watch. That is O' Henry's story.”⁶¹

Thus Ghosh himself has affirmed that his film is a new production with newer dimension of thought and philosophy. From Rituparno’s comments it is clear that this film is loosely based on O’ Henry’s story. Thus it can be termed as an adaptation which is more of a re interpretation of the short story. It will not be wrong to say that the old story is served with new colour.

Differences between the film and the text are many. Some of them are furnished below-

- The story of O’ Henry has a very western setting while in the film the setting is very much Indian.
- The story is written in English but it is adapted in the language Hindi.
- To cope with the cultural difference the name of the hero and the heroine is altered. Here they are called Neeru and Mannu instead of Della and Jim.
- Unlike the text there is no Christmas celebration here in the film.
- There is no exchange of Christmas gifts rather it is a financial help exchanged in the form of gift.
- Here the hero and the heroine are not married instead they are ex lovers.
- Unlike the story Neeru who is Della from the story is married to somebody else.
- There is falsehood and pretention about the financial condition of both the central characters from the film. But in the story there is no such pretention.
- In the story Della cuts off her hair but here in the film there is no such incident.

- The story tells the reader about gifts like a Gold Chain for the watch of Jim and a comb for Della but in the film gifts are the gold chain of Neeru and the collected money of Mannu.

With the above mentioned alterations *Raincoat* is a film which narrates the story of Manoj and Neeru. The character of Manoj is played by Ajay Devgan and the character of Neeru is played by Aishwarya Rai. Manoj comes to Kolkata after being jobless. He has an aspiration to start up a business and for that he asks for monetary help from his friends settled in Kolkata. Though he gets help from his friends, his helplessness starts after meeting Neeru, his erstwhile love. After meeting Neeru, who is now married, Manoj enters into a long conversation which ultimately ends up in lies to protect each other's truth. Neeru pretends to be rich and burdened with luxuries as she is married to a businessman, who travels to different countries of the world for business purpose. The reality of Neeru's life is different from what it appears to be. In reality everything inside her house is the property of a furniture retailer. Though she claims that there is no electricity because of the storm, the truth is that electricity is cut off by the house owner as the rent has not paid by her. On the other hand Manoj also knits a story of his own. He introduces himself to Neeru as the owner of a company which produces TV serials. He adds that he is here in Kolkata to sell a slot of his production. Manoj pretends to be a successful business entrepreneur, who has now learned to flirt with even his secretary. What Manoj projects to Neeru is much different from what he projects to Sheela, Alok's (Manoj's friend) wife. In reality Manoj is in need of financial help from his friends and thus Manoj burst into tears inside the bathroom, to which Sheela said, 'Next time you cry in the bathroom please turn the shower on. You need to learn a few things from us girls too.'

Apart from this truth and lie possibilities of the story of Neeru and Manoj, the narrative shifts to a flashback where Neeru and Manoj are in love but this love is not going to be settled as Neeru gets a marriage proposal from another suitor. Manoj who is unable to express his feelings, his love to Neeru, considers this incident as his ill fate.

Manoj holds her wrist tight as she declares about her marriage but by then it is too late for him . Manoj can be seen as an intruder into the world of illusions created by Neeru . Another intruder in the story is the landlord “ the landlord is like the figure of the blackmailer- he is someone who uses the knowledge of another person’s secret, his capacity to see through the closet , as a source of power and subjugation.”⁶² The landlord is an onlooker from the society outside, who seems to have detailed knowledge of everything that exists inside the closed doors of Neeru’s house. At times the possibility of prostitution is hinted by the landlord .The possibility of prostitution is hinted by the world which is unknown. It is the dark , unknown, and hazy world of Neeru which generate curiosity to know. When this curiosity is not served well, imagination plunges .This imagination fuels such possibilities. Richard Allen argues “Neeru’s closet is fundamentally created from anxieties about social status and social role. She fears regression to a socially fallen , penniless condition of life on the street that is close to where she finds herself.”⁶³ If Allen’s word’s can be followed , Neeru’s reactions , her made up stories can be read as to be a protective shield . This shield saves her from falling down in her social status. Her closed world is like a dense, dark secret which can not be revealed to anyone, not even to the man he once loved. This secret world of Neeru also suggest her failure in marriage , her struggle to maintain a relation which never worked. Her identity as a house wife who simply does nothing apart from waiting for her husband provides her the domesticated look. Her crisis of life is locked up inside the doors of her house. She fears that if this crisis is reveled she will fall down in the expectation of the society and then she will be vulnerable for any kind of attacks from the world outside.

In Indian society it is often believed that after marriage a woman is protected only with her husband. In most situations it happens that a woman struggle through a failed marriage only with the hope that she is safe with a controlling hand above her. In Neeru’s case too, her prearranged marriage is devoid of love, affection, and financial

support from her male counterpart. With this marriage, Neeru simply gets the a tag of being married and even gets a closet where she can hide herself.

On the other hand Manoj also keeps his secret. Throughout the film Manoj's character is shown to be in a roller coaster ride. He can not find himself stable either in relationships or in his business ventures. He feels himself to be an utter failure in life. Living in the same patriarchal society as that of Neeru, he gets himself in such a situation where he is not allowed to react properly to his emotions. In such a society he is given the burden to be a man all the time. Therefore he could not stop Neeru from getting married to someone else. It was a marriage arranged by Neeru's parents. Thus in spite of the love he felt for Neeru, he couldn't stop her. He could not go against the society and its norms. This is the reason why he could never propose Neeru, could not say 'don't go'. Even he can not cry properly, as for a man it is prohibited to burst into tears. He selects a bathroom where he can shed his tears without letting others know. His efforts are visible where he struggles enough to be a man. He seems to be in the run of meeting up all the expectations of a society from a man. So Richard Allen again argues that Manoj's sense of shame is caused by the fact that he fails to meet the burden of social expectation, yet it comes to be experienced by Manoj as a sense of who he is, that is less than a man"⁶³ In such a patriarchal setup the need to appropriate his position leads Manoj to a state of confusion and depression. It is not simply the truth with Manoj, rather a truth for Neeru too. Both these characters are positioned in a crude patriarchal setup where they act as the puppets. Their secrets tell a lot about their anxiety and their dilemma. Their need is to keep their secrets intact. This need is of maintaining an image and a standard which is set by the society. It is essential for them to maintain this image while maintaining their secret. Thus Allen says "Both of them keep the others secret even when they find out the truth, and in a twist that is inspired by O' Henry's short story, The Gift of the Magi, they each leave with the other as a parting gift, their most prized possession. The concealed nature of gifts becomes a

charged expression of their unrealized love and the nature of its existence between them as an open secret.”⁶⁴

Rituparno has cinematically rendered the unrealized love and pain through this film. Within a tightly knit narrative and with its slow pace projection Rituparno has beautifully handled this love story. Within such a narrative where most of the truths are untold and affections unrealized, Rituparno had to use songs to communicate the untold love, pain, suffering, longing. Like most of his films the music of this film too plays a vital role. From the very beginning of the film, the narrative and its silence is given its voice through the lines of songs. Rituparno himself has written the lyrics for this film. Unlike other three films discussed in this chapter, here he has not used any *Rabindra Sangeet* (songs written by Rabindranath Tagore). Matching up with the language of the film- Hindi, Rituparno has written the lyrics in Maithili. Rituparno's choice of language and its use in writing the lyrics of the film is again a planned move to reach up to the functional effect of music for this film. Thus when Rituparno was asked “The music in your films is spectacular. And in *Raincoat*, you have Gulzar to write the lyrics.” Rituparno replied “.....No, I wrote all the lyrics for *Raincoat* except for the two wedding songs. *Mathura nagarpati kahay tum gokoli jao* is mine; *Piya tora kaisa abhiman* is mine as is *Akele hum nadiya kinare*. I wrote the lyrics for all these. And this is not Hindi, I don't know Hindi, I don't write in Hindi. It is Maithili, which is a conglomerate language, a mixture of Sanskrit, a little bit of Hindi, and Brijbhasha. *Raincoat*, for instance, follows a much more native, plaintive kind of Indian music. We purposely made it different because it was a simple story and the music reflected that.”⁶⁵ This conglomeration of Hindi and Braj Bhasa or Maithili has provided a new dimension to the film and its flow of narration. It is not very much new for Rituparno to work with such a language variation in his films. The use of Braj Bhasa has always allured Rituparno. For him the depth of emotion and the intensity of feeling seems to come out with all its strength with this language. Time and again he has used this language in his lyrics. One more reason might be its association with Vaishnavite cult

and its philosophy. In his autobiographical book *First Person* which was published posthumously includes his opinion and his fascination to work on a subject which carries such a philosophy. The Vaishnavite cult and Braj Bhasa provided him the ground to articulate his own understanding on love and his questions on identity. So Kaustav Bakshi writes “ it is interesting how guided by Tagore, he has time and again returned to Braj Bhasa and Vaishnavite cult, which provided hir with an alternative language and culture of the erotic, respectively, to articulate queer desires . Ghosh found in the Vaishnavite cult a vision of love, eroticism and desire, markedly distinct from the bourgeois, hetero patriarchal ways of looking at these.”⁶⁶ Kaustav Bakshi uses the term *hir* to normalize the lack of words to indicate Rituparno’s gender, and his sexual identity. His statement quoted above suggests that Rituparno’s inclination towards Braj Bhasa is guided by Tagore. If Tagore is his guide in such experimentation then it must be said that in this adaptation too there is a chance to trace on the influence of Tagore on Rituparno’s creativity.

There is no use of eroticism found in this film but there is a vision of love and desire that gets reflected in this adaptation. This vision of love and desire is expressive enough in the music of this film. When he writes *Mathura nagarpati kahay tum gokoli jao*, he reminds the listeners or the viewers about the love story of Radha and Krishna, their separation and their unfulfilled desire. With the lyric *Piya tora kaisa abhiman* another essence of love is expressed. It is an expression of that anger which involves love and suffering. *Akele hum nadiya kinare* voices the loneliness in love. Here it can be said that with these musical venture in the film a text of love is created to equate with O’ Henry’s *The Gift of the Magi* which is essentially a love story. Along with this, music plays a vital role in nativising O’ Henry’s story .In a way this native and plaintive kind of music used for this film is a benchmark for such adaptation. Music has provided this film a very Indian flavor. This kind of music has inserted a crude Indian element into the story of O’Henry. Thus Richard Allen in his article *Closeted Desires and open secret: Raincoat and Noukadubi* has said that “Ghosh anatomies arranged

marriages in terms of closeted desires and open secrets..... Ghosh serves to articulate the particular saliency and cultural specificity of the closet in a society traditionally governed by rigorous social restraint upon the expression of desire. His work offers a kind of the closet in which closeted desires and the open secrets they engender emerge with their own distinctive history within the Indian context”⁶⁷ . Richard Allen’s words have very clearly expressed Rituparno’s moves with the story of O’ Henry. He is pretty much clear in his statement that Rituparno has adapted O’ Henry’s short story within the Indian context. This is what, is essentially specific with this adaptation of the popular story of O’ Henry.

In this adaptation Rituparno has retained some of the plot points and a bit of its character’s personality. It is brave move for Rituparno as a film maker to depart from the original story. He could do so as he realized the impact of casting famous actors and actresses in adaptations. With this film too he has capitalized on his casting choices. These choices made by the director is crucial in dealing with a story which is to be told without following the trend of popular Bollywood movies. It is because of this strategic choice that *Raincoat* is counted among the best films of Rituparno. *Raincoat* could amuse the masses with its inclusion of popular Bollywood actors and actresses like Aishwariya and Ajay Devgan. Apart from this it must be said that the film is successful in appropriating the story of O’ Henry in the present day context. It is even successful in grabbing the attention of audience towards it. This adaptation justifies the truth that “Any overview of literature of a given historical period is , however , further conditioned by the awareness of often radically different perspectives between then and now.”⁶⁸

To conclude this chapter it can be stated that Rituparno Ghosh has re-read literature in his adaptations. His adaptations can be read as a new text with the old carcass. In his own style he has tried to appropriate those literary contents which influenced him to raise his voice against the accepted norms of a patriarchal society. His effort to unleash the less talked about world of women is visible in his adaptations too.

In all the four films discussed above, he comes up with woman protagonists who are instrumental in highlighting many issues ranging from the question of identity to the stability of the meaning of home and marriage. This is the reason why, he is often termed as a woman's director.

Adaptation of literary texts provided him a tested and accepted story, with which he could tell something new to the viewers. As an artist, he has cinematized these adaptations in such a manner that, these become his own artistic creations. His thought, his ideas and his arguments are juxtaposed through the narrative of the film. In all the four adaptations chosen for this study, Rituparno Ghosh evolves with an auteur's understanding. He has suggested newer possibilities of reading a text through his adaptations. Particularly the adaptations chosen for this study has evolved as a variation of the source text. Thus the author of *Literature, Film and their Hideous Progeny: Adaptation and Elasticity*, argues "adaptation can change our ways of determining where individual works of art begin and end and shift our ideas about what constitute art in general."⁶⁹ Here it can be emphasized that it is simply art that has survived through these adaptations. It is the movement of art from one medium to the other. The art which was captured in written words of a book gets shifted to another medium of art, ie. the film. In the artistic world of cinema, written words from the book are communicated through the moving image on a screen. In Rituparno's films too Tagore's and O' Henry's art has flown into the artistic world of Rituparno. This flow of art moves with interpretation and perspective of the artist.

At last it will be noteworthy to say that adaptation often go hand in hand with the directors freedom to depart from the original text. In the present day context "directors freedom to depart from the limitations of a given text, serves as a reminder of the twentieth century's growing awareness of the instability of the relationship between the viewer and the viewed object, the reader and the text, the past and the present."⁷⁰ This relation between the viewer and the viewed object and the reader and the text is so vital that without giving attention to this issue, this reading on adaptation will be incomplete.

Therefore this relation between the viewer and the viewed , the reader and the written text is going to be discussed in the next chapter of this project.

Notes:

1. Sangeeta Dutta. "Invoking Love , Death and an Elsewhere". *Rituparno Ghosh Cinema, Gender and Art*. Ed. Sangeeta Dutta. Kaustav Bakshi and Rohit K.Dasgupta. New York: Routledge, 2016. 30.Print.
2. Sangeeta 29.
3. Milton Music. "Amar Rabindranath ,Ranjan Bandyopadhyay& Rituparno Ghosh." Online video clip. You Tube. Jan 11,2016.Web.
4. Milton Music. You Tube.
5. Sangeeta
6. *Alpona* is a painting done with hand . Artist use a paste of rice and flour to paint on auspicious occasions in Bengal.
7. *Jiban Smriti*. Dir. Rituparno Ghosh. Subtitle. 3013.DVD.
8. Satyajit Ray. *Bishoy Chalachitra*.Kolkata:Ananda Publishers.Print.
9. *Choker Bali*. Dir. Rituparno Ghosh. Perf. Aishwariya Ray, Prosenjit Chakraborty,Tota Roy Choudhury,Raima Sen. Shree Venkatesh Films: 2003.DVD
- 10.Chandrava Chakraborty. "Relocating Tagore's Binodini: New Spaces of Representation in Rituparno Ghosh's *Chokher Bali*". The IAFOR Journal of Literature and Librarianship. 2.1, 2003.101.Web.
- 11.These words appear at the very beginning of the film. so these are quoted from the visual only.
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