

Golden Jubilee of A Lyric Poem “Atithi”

Pallav Mukhopadhyay

Atithi (1965)

- Black and White
- Story : Rabindranath Tagore
- Acting : Partha Sarathi

Mukhopadhyay, Basabi Bandyopadhyay, Salil Dutta, Soumen Mukhopadhyay, Smita Sinha, Shamita Biswas, Mita Mukhopadhyay, Ajitesh Bandyopadhyay, Bankim Ghosh, Binoy Lahiri, Rasaraaj Chakraborty, R.K. Sen, Sadhak Dasgupta, Satu Majumdar, Tapan Bhattacharya, Swapan Bhattacharya, Achintya Banerjee, Surya Chatterjee, Manajit Lahidi, Krishna Bose, Dipali Mukherjee, Saswati Mukherjee and others.

- Cinematography : DilipRanjan Mukhopadhyay

- Art Direction : Suniti Mitra
- Editing : Subodh Roy
- Producer : New Theatres (Exhibitors)

Private Limited

- Distribution : Chhayabani Private Limited

- Screenplay, Music and Direction : Tapan Sinha

- Release : Rupabani, Aruna, Bharati, 04.06.1965

Production

Tapan Sinha directed ‘Atithi’ on behalf of S. N. Sarkar, the younger brother of Birendranath Sarkar. Producer Asit Chowdhury told Sinha, “Why did Rabindranath remain in literature only? He would be dragged in film also. And if we can do it, it will be a real job.”

Subtitle

Eminent journalist Santosh Kumar Ghosh translated the subtitle of the film. Ghosh had a good command over English language. He translated ‘Ei Akashe Amar Mukti...’ as ‘I seek freedom in the sky-in dust-in grass’.

Journey to Venice International Film Festival

Eminent Filmmaker Satyajit Ray suggested Sinha to conclude the film by the scene where Tarapada jumped into the cluster of boats. He suggested to cut down the tragic sequence of Tarapada’s mother in the later part of the film. He questioned even the use of Tagore songs as the background music of the film. Ray’s argument was it was fit to the audience of Kolkata but in foreign no one could understand. He told Sinha why the director himself did not compose the music. According to Ray, the film ended with the jumping scene and the result was good.

Director’s Point of View

I think every filmmaker or writer has a certain responsibility to the society and he should be committed. I personally think of myself as a humanist. It all started long back when I made that film ‘Atithi’ (The Runaway) in which the spirit of freedom was depicted excellently by Tagore in a very small space. This was in 1965/66. That brought a change in me, because I was looking at it from a global perspective; it was as if all the windows of my room were opened, as I began exploring the freedom of man with respect to the society and humanity at large. It is immaterial whether that particular human being is literate or illiterate; handicapped or healthy – it is his life, it is his struggle.

Concept/Message

The focal message of ‘Atithi’ is eternal. It has deep relation with the aspiration of human being. The wish of freedom of Tarapada is the wish of every human being. In his childhood Tagore was confined in his room. How he viewed the external world perhaps remained in his memory while writing ‘Atithi’. The external world attracts him but there is no way to trespass. Each and every human being like to enjoy the joyfulness of freedom. The music of free human being exists hand

in hand with the nature. That's why Tarapada left the home repeatedly. The joy of freedom has been exhibited clearly in the film. In fact, 'Atithi' is one of the four films of Tapan Sinha which the director himself liked much. It was an adventurous job to make a film on the story of Rabindranath. But according to Sinha, his dependence and assurance was Rabindranath.

According to him, Tarapada, the hero of this story is Tagore himself. He made Tarapada to do such thing which Tagore did not do physically. The film shows the deep artistic essence and treatment of Tapan Sinha. Sinha agreed in one of his interview that he wanted to view 'Atithi' repeatedly. Sinha believed on the universal freedom that 'Atithi' catered. From the humanist angle it is the freedom of the human being. Sinha made a candid confession that he did not get any second freedom-mad character like in 'atithi'. Nothing else, just freedom attracted him.

Dialogue

The dialogue of the film received praiseworthy reactions.

There are so many untold stories between two sentences of an ideal short story. 'Atithi' was not an exception. The director's love for the short story helped him to write such an attractive and mind blowing dialogue. The change of mental makeup of Charu, the intermingling of the tune of Tarapada and the tune of the nature, the simplicity of Sonamani all features were in a recessive state in the story.

Screenplay

Director Tapan Sinha changed the last scene from the main narrative. The tune was same only the perspective changed. In the story, Tarapada jumped in the lap of nature. The cloud, storm, rain attracted him and he was missing. In film, the director brought him in the fair of human beings.

Music

Producer of this film Mr. S. N. Sarkar suggested Sinha himself to direct the music since Sinha was fond of Tagore songs.

The music of the film also received

praiseworthy reactions. There was a Tagore Song 'Dhara Diyechhi Go, Ami Akasher Pakhi' in Tarapada's lip. It was not a playback. Actor Partha Sarathi Mukhopadhyay portraying the role of Tarapada himself sang the song. It was spontaneously sung by Partha.

'Atithi' exhibited other types of songs. Various forms of boats are being approached towards the fair. The audience witness a single boat has a unique song. In fact, fair means the assemblage of many people. The director's point of view was to uphold the cultural diversity of different people approaching towards the fair by performing their unique style and form of songs. Various soundtracks were used sometimes together and sometimes separately like the folksong of Biharis, the courtesan's song etc. The director wanted to construct a variety of style and form by amalgamation of various music and tunes. It created such a huge attraction that Tarapada was compelled to jump in the river. 'Atithi' is a lyrical film. A lyrical poem. Tapan Sinha loved to read literature and loved to see films based on literature. The tone is in the story. The director wholeheartedly transferred it to the celluloid with utmost dedication and sincerity.

The montage of songs in different boats was superb. Sachin Dev Burman and Hemanta Mukhopadhyay liked the music. Tapan Sinha was of opinion that the fair of human beings appears as multi-dimensional. Though some critics opined that it was a overlapping. The story writer Tagore ended the story in nature and the director Tapan Sinha ended it in the assemblage of human being.

Award

President's Award, Certificate of Merit, 1965 ; Certificate of Merit in Venice International Film Festival, 1966.