

Adaptation of *Charulata* from Text to Screen: Narrative Analysis of the Cinematic Creation (Creative Form) of Director Satyajit Ray

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Abstract

Many great filmmakers of the world like Robert Bresson, Andrei Tarkovsky, Alfred Hitchcock, Jean-Luc Godard and Lucino Visconti have adapted from literature (Raj, 2021), to make cinematic masterpieces. Both ordinary and classic literary text has been reliable source for film all over the world. Recognising the significance of adaptation, the Academy awards have a special category for 'Best Adapted Screenplay'. This underlines the significance of films adapted from literary text and reflects the significant differences present in a literary text and its cinematic adaptation. Satyajit Ray can be considered as a Renaissance Man, having many talents in one, is the most prominent name who has consistently adapted short stories, novellas, and novels to the screen. Ray's versatility led him to direct movies adapted from literature of Rabindranath Tagore and Munshi Premchand to play by Henrik Ibsen. In fact, Ray prominently adapted the work of other literati including his grandfather, Upendra Kishor Raichowdhury's literary work, *Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne* (1969). He has directed 36 films consisting of 26 feature films, five documentaries and two short films. Among those 26 feature films, 24 films of Ray are adapted from different literary sources. Ray's *Charulata* (1964) is one of the most acclaimed films of the director (Bhattacharjee, 2016). In fact, Ray considered this film to be his perfect creation where if given the chance to redirect, he would not make any change in it (Ray, 1992). *Charulata* (1964) was adapted from Rabindranath Tagore's novella *Nastanirh* (1901). In *Charulata* (1964), set in colonial Calcutta, the director explores the life of modern women from an upper-class family. The original literary text was published during colonial rule and reflects the urban society of that period. This paper addresses the following questions: How does the narrative structure of *Nastanirh* differ from its cinematic adaptation *Charulata*? What changes in characterisation does Ray make in adapting the novella into film form? and How does Ray's adaptation reflect his style of cinematic storytelling? This paper employs a qualitative methodology based on comparative narrative analysis and adaptation theory. This paper seeks to analyse how Ray, while retaining the emotional foundation of Tagore's

text, reconstructs its narrative and enriches it cinematically through symbolic imagery. This study can also reflect how Ray treats a literary text while adapting it into a film. The film can represent the style of adaptation by Satyajit Ray.

Keywords: *Adaptation, Literary Text, Narrative Style, Bengali Cinema, Satyajit Ray.*

1. Introduction

Adaptation has been part of filmmaking since its inception. Processing and translating a literary work into a film poses unique challenge as well as opportunity for every filmmaker. Though transferring a dramatic or literary narrative to cinematic form may seem a 'derivative' or a secondary form of art, adaptation gives the opportunity to showcase an original artistic venture (Cartmell, 2012). If one carefully notices earliest films, adaptation of folktales, stage plays and literary works were used by filmmakers to attract audiences. In the silent era, films like *A Trip to the Moon* (1902), *The Great Train Robbery* (1903) and *Les Miserables* (1909) are the earliest examples of adaptation. During this silent era, adaptations of plays, classic novels and stage productions of Shakespeare were very common. D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) is an example of one of the earliest notable adaptations in cinema. Later during the Golden Age of Hollywood or popularly known as Studio era some classic films like *Gone with the Wind* (1939), *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) and *Casablanca* (1942) were adapted from literature. Master directors like Alfred Hitchcock and Orson Welles brought their unique vision to reshape the narrative through literary adaptation. In Europe, the rise of New Wave cinema paved the way for Auteurs and in America independent filmmakers experimented with narrative structures and narrative innovations. French director Francois Truffaut's *Fahrenheit 451* (1966) and American director Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) are the examples of the experiment where they challenged the conventional way of adaptation. The auteur theory helped to establish directors' control over adaptation process and creative vision. In recent years, one can easily notice the amount of adapted content in popular culture. From Nolan's *Batman Trilogy*, J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings Trilogy*, *Harry Potter* series, to movies based on Marvel and DC comics shows the essential relationship between literary text and cinematic adaptation.

1.1 Early Adaptations in Bengali Cinema

Bengal has a rich tradition of literature and storytelling. This literary tradition has helped the region to enrich its cultural heritage and intellectual depth. In cultural heritage, one has to keep in mind about Bengali cinema. Like world cinema, Bengali cinema is also heavily indebted to literature. In Bengali cinema's silent era, Madan Theatre Company

was pioneer in filmmaking based on mythology, folk tale, theatre and literature. Under the banner of Madan theatre, directors like Rustomji Dhotiwala, Priyanath Gangopadhyay, Jyotishchandra Bandyopadhyay, Shishir Kumar Bhaduri, B. S. Rajhans, Madhu Basu, Nareshchandra Mitra and Chittaranjan Goswami made films (Mukhopadhyay, 1959). *Bilwamangal* (1919), the first Bengali film directed by Rustomji Dhotiwala was based on a story by Champshi Udeshi. Later *Shivaratri*, *Maa Durga*, *Jaydev*, *Krishnakanter Will*, *Kapalkundala*, *Durgeshnandini*, *Noukadubi* and other movies were made on different adaptation (Mukhopadhyay, 1959). Then came the high point for adaptation in the mid-20th century and afterwards. This period is often referred to as the Golden age of Bengali cinema where directors like Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Ghatak and Mrinal Sen used literary texts to make some greatest films of world cinema. Satyajit Ray's *Apu Trilogy*, Ritwik Ghatak's *Meghe Dhaka Tara* and Mrinal Sen's *Ek Din Pratidin* are few examples of adaptation which set the bar high for Bengali cinema. Later in modern era roughly starting from 1980s Rituparno Ghosh's *Chokher Bali* (2003), Anjan Dutta's *Biomkesh Bakshi* series, Kaushik Ganguly's *Bisorjon* (2017) and Aparna Sen's *Sati* (1989) carried the trend of adaptation and paved the way for present day directors like Srijit Mukherji's *Kakababu* Series, Arindam Sil's *Shabor* Series, Suman Ghosh's *Kabuliwala* (2023), Birsa Dasgupta's *Biomkesh O Durgo Rahasya* (2023) and others.

1.2 Adaptation and Satyajit Ray

Renowned filmmakers such as Robert Bresson, Andrei Tarkovsky, Alfred Hitchcock, Jean-Luc Godard, and Luchino Visconti have drawn extensively from literature to craft cinematic masterpieces (Raj, 2021). Across the globe, both canonical and popular literary works have served as enduring sources for film adaptations. Acknowledging the importance of this creative intersection, the Academy Awards includes a dedicated category for 'Best Adapted Screenplay' (Raj, 2021), highlighting not only the value of adaptations but also the fundamental differences that exist between literary narratives and their cinematic counterparts. In the Indian context, Satyajit Ray stands out as a true polymath- a Renaissance figure, who consistently brought short stories, novellas, and novels to life on screen with remarkable artistic vision. Satyajit Ray is known for his distinctive approach to adaptation. His deep respect for original literary text while maintaining the directorial vision is one of the notable approaches in Indian Cinema. Ray's first feature film *Pather Panchali* adapted from Bibuthibhushan Bandopadhyay's novel is a testament to that vision. To put it in Ray's words, 'I wanted to translate the text onto the screen without losing the essence'(Ray & Ray, 2011). Ray directed 29 feature films (36 including shorts and documentaries), only six of these feature-length films were based on completely original screenplays and 23 films were adapted from different literary sources

(*Filmography, Satyajit Ray Org*). His unique narrative style is based upon realist approach where he portrays everyday life to build narrative. Detailing in composition and use of natural settings makes his visual storytelling interesting. Commenting on Ray's visual style famous British actress and film critic Marie Seton has said "Ray's adaptations are marked by a harmony between the visual and the narrative, creating a seamless translation of literature into film"(Ganguly, 2010). Another very important aspects in his adaptation style are character development and psychological depth. In *Ghare Baire* (1984) adapted from Tagore's novel with same title, Ray used conflicting emotions and ideological struggles to reflect upon India's freedom movement. His deep empathy for character development has added a new dimension to the process of adaptation. Ray is also known for choosing thematic diversity and innovation in his films. *Apu Trilogy* (*Pather Panchali*, *Aparajito* and *Apur Sansar*; 1955-1959) adapted from *Pather Panchali* by Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay shows indomitable human spirit where sense of hope prevails as the lead character, Apu grows up. *Jalsaghar* (1958), *Devi* (1960), and *Sadgati* (1981) talks about conflict between traditional versus modernity. *Ganashatru* (1989) focuses upon corruption in political system. *Aranyer Din Ratri* (1969) comments on Calcutta's hectic life and peculiar culture while comparing it with a distant tribal village of Jharkhand. *Hirak Rajar Deshe* (1980) is a political allegory where oppression of the working class in totalitarian system becomes the main theme.

2. Review of Literature

Adaptation is a process that transforms a literary text into a cinematic form. The transformation is not merely about translating words into visuals rather its more interactive in nature where a director puts fresh perspective in the cinematic text while preserving the essence of original literary text. In order to understand the depth of adaptation, literature review can help to explore various scholarly works which are based on different theoretical underpinnings and critical discourse surrounding them.

2.1 Adaptation Theory

Scholarly debates on adaptation often revolve around fidelity, creativity, and cultural significance. Bluestone (1957) first argued that adaptation inevitably transforms a text due to differences between verbal and visual media. Andrew (1984) described adaptation as a cultural and interpretative act, while Stam (2000) rejected fidelity as the main criterion, advocating for a pluralist perspective that accounts for filmmaker's vision and socio-political context. Hutcheon (2006) expanded the discourse by highlighting the role of audiences in generating meaning across time and cultures. Later, Cartmell and Whelehan (2007) provided a comprehensive overview, tracing adaptation's historical evolution and

cultural functions.

2.2 Narrative Analysis

Narrative theory provides tools for examining how texts and films construct meaning. Eisenstein (1949) emphasized formal stylistic analysis, while Propp (1968) and Strauss (1963) investigated structures and recurring motifs. Barthes (1977), Genette, and Todorov explored semiotics and narrative discourse, whereas Bakhtin (1981) foregrounded the multiplicity of voices. Bordwell (1985) distinguished between *fabula* (story) and *syuzhet* (plot), offering a framework for analyzing narrative organization. Together, these approaches demonstrate how adaptation reshapes storytelling strategies through both structure and style.

2.3 Tagore and Adaptation

Tagore's works have been widely adapted in South Asian cinema, reflecting their thematic depth and dramatic potential. Scholars such as Ahmed (2022) and Rahman (2013) highlight Tagore's engagement with cinema and the challenges of adaptation while preserving literary mood. Renganathan and Bhattacharya (2020) situate Tagore within Indian theatre traditions, and Mandal (2015) interrogates the feminist possibilities and contradictions in his portrayals of women. Kundu (1998) examines Ray's *Ghare Baire* in relation to nationalist discourse, while Sengoopta (2012) underscores Ray's ambivalence toward Tagore, evident in *Agantuk*. Chaudhuri (2020), analyzing *Tasher Desh*, demonstrates postmodern experimentation in Tagore's adaptations.

2.4 Earlier Work on *Charulata*

Mishra (2023) frames the film *Charulata* (1964) as a "transcreation" rather than translation, while Bhattacharjee (2020) views Charu's character as embodying women's self-actualization against societal norms. Feminist readings diverge: Sanyal (2020) applies Mulvey's "male gaze" theory, whereas Bannerjee (2017) critiques the ambiguous ending as reinforcing "new patriarchy." Sadhu and Sengupta (2021) highlighted Ray's nuanced use of verbal and non-verbal cues. In contrast, Sil (1999) criticizes Ray for distorting Tagore's original narrative. Collectively, these studies underscore the richness and contested nature of *Charulata* as a site of adaptation discourse.

3. Aim and Objectives

The aim of this paper is to conduct a comparative narrative analysis of Ray's film *Charulata* (1964) and Tagore's novella *Nastanirh*. An author writes a story for a reader but a director directs a film for viewers or audience, so, from the nature of the text one

can easily understand that the cinematic text tends to be different from the literary text. To understand the difference between those two texts, narrative analysis can be useful. This paper also compares the characterisation in order to understand how the director puts a different perspective while adapting a literary text. This paper also identifies differences or changes made by Ray during the process of adaptation which presents his work as unique.

The objectives of this study are to:

- Find out the narrative structure/style of the literary text (*Nastanirh*) and the cinematic adaptation in *Charulata*;
- Compare the characterisation in the literary text (*Nastanirh*) and cinematic adaptation (*Charulata*); and
- Identify differences/changes in the cinematic adaptation with reference to its original literary text.

4. Methodology

This paper adopts a qualitative research methodology grounded in adaptation theory and narrative analysis. It seeks to critically examine the transformation of Rabindranath Tagore's novella *Nastanirh* (1901) into the cinematic work *Charulata* (1964), directed by Satyajit Ray. The research design involves a comparative textual and visual analysis aimed at identifying the similarities, divergences, and interpretative shifts between the source text and its cinematic adaptation. The paper uses narrative theory particularly the distinction between *fabula* (story) and *syuzhet* (plot) to investigate how the cinematic form restructures and reinterprets the original narrative. The analytical framework of the paper incorporates narrative analysis, visual semiotics, and adaptation theory. It draws upon the works of Linda Hutcheon, Robert Stam, and Deborah Cartmell to understand the concepts of fidelity, transformation, and authorial interpretation. Narrative elements such as point of view, character development, temporal structure, and narration are studied in relation to their representation in both the literary and cinematic forms. In the case of the film, visual elements such as *mise-en-scène*, camera movement, sound design, and symbolism are also analysed as tools of narrative construction. The primary sources for the paper include Tagore's *Nastanirh* (1901) and Satyajit Ray's film *Charulata* (1964). Both the literary and cinematic texts are examined in their original Bengali versions, with English translations referred to where necessary to retain linguistic and cultural fidelity. It aims to demonstrate how Satyajit Ray, as a filmmaker, constructs a distinct visual narrative that

remains emotionally faithful to the original text, while simultaneously reimagining its form and aesthetics for the screen.

5. Findings and Discussion

This section deals with the findings of the study based on the objectives formulated.

5.1. Tagore's Novella (*Nastanirh*, 1901)

Nastanirh or *The Broken Nest* (1901) is a story about relationship in a family, their emotions and the societal norms they encounter in the early 20th century Bengal. The novella opens with Bhupati, a newspaper editor who is always busy with the newspaper business and day to day politics. Due to this his wife Charulata, an intelligent and well-read woman feels isolated and neglected in her marriage. Bhupati invited Amal, his cousin to alleviate Charulata's loneliness. Inviting Amal to their house worked, it helped to break Charulata's monotonous life and breathed fresh air. With companionship of Amal, they started to discuss literature, poetry and music which gradually lead their relationship to a romantic one. Sensing the complexity of the situation Amal became cautious. On the other side, Bhupati had no idea what was going on as he barely gave time in family affairs. After marriage, Amal went abroad for study, Charulata again became lonely and heartbroken. Initially Bhupati was unaware about the emotional turmoil of Charulata but later he realised that due to his workaholic nature she felt neglected. He also realised that the emotional gap between them has increased so much that despite his trying it is not going to fill. This novella ends with a melancholic note when Bhupati's newspaper business failed and both husband and wife confronted brokenness of their relationship. *Nastanirh* thus metaphorically reflects the collapse of the relationship and unfulfilled emotional desires.

5.2. Ray's Film (*Charulata*, 1964)

The film *Charulata* opens with Charu, a young and intelligent wife who lives in boredom and loneliness. Her husband Bhupati is an editor and owner of "*The Sentinel*", a political newspaper, often engrossed in his work that he barely spends time with family. To alleviate her boredom Bhupati invites Amal, his cousin to stay with them. Amal is a graduate and aspires to become a writer. As Charulata has interest in literature, his companionship with Amal became infused with literature, poetry and music. They start to spend time and discuss writings of Amal. Charulata gradually developed some feelings for Amal. Amal decided to get married and travel abroad for study. Charulata felt devastated in such situation. When Amal suddenly left for his study, Charulata became even lonelier and had no clue why Amal left in such a hurry. As the crisis was unfolding, Bhupati's newspaper business collapsed due to money constraint created by his own relative. Now the household was

going through tremendous emotional undercurrents. Bhupati had realised the emotional detachment of Charulata and her bond with Amal. In such a situation, Bhupati and Charulata both tried to reconcile. But their outstretched hands never meet, reflecting the fragile state of relationship and emotional distance between them, keeping an open-ended conclusion in the film.

5.2.1. Narrative Structure/Style of the Literary Text and the Cinematic Adaptation

Under the mentioned objectives both the texts, Tagore's novella *Nastanirh* and Ray's film *Charulata* (1964) are being analysed based on narrative structure and style. How the story is narrated in film and how the story is narrated in the original literary text is being compared.

The narrative structures and styles of Rabindranath Tagore's novella *Nastanirh* and Satyajit Ray's film adaptation *Charulata* (1964) offer both similarities and differences, reflecting the unique qualities of each medium while retaining the essence of the story. Both the novella and the film place Charu at the centre of the narrative, exploring her loneliness and relationship with Amal. The original literary text uses third person omniscient narrator to give insights about inner thoughts and emotions of the characters while the film shows the camera's perspective (sometimes almost aligning with Charulata) through visual storytelling to convey emotional and psychological intricacies of the characters. Here the cinematography plays a crucial role through the use of light and shadow to mirror Charulata's inner world and evolving emotional nuances. Then Charu's fondness for reading and her intellectual connection with Amal is present in both the texts, emphasizing their bond over literature. However, *Nastanirh* emphasizes the subtleties of the mental states and interrelationships between all the characters, giving more narrative weight to each individual's psychological depth. On the other hand, *Charulata* (1964), presents close view on Charu's perspective, making her loneliness and emotional isolation the film's focal point. The other characters are seen primarily in relation to her. The adaptation of *Nastanirh* into *Charulata* (1964) retains the core narrative of emotional complexity and interpersonal tensions but the film emphasizes Charulata's personal narrative through visual storytelling and a more focused narrative arc. To sum it up while the novella relies on prose and internal monologues to convey emotions, the film uses visual and auditory elements, such as mise-en-scène, cinematography, and music to present a somewhat different narrative while keeping the essence of the story.

5.2.2. Compare the Characterisation in the Literary Text and Cinematic Adaptation

Under this objective comparison of characterisation in the literary text *Nastanirh* (1901)

by Rabindranath Tagore and its cinematic adaptation *Charulata* (1964) by Satyajit Ray can be examined based on five key parameters: Physical Description, Action/Attitude/Behaviour, Inner Thought, Reactions, and Speech.

The characterisation in Tagore's *Nastanirh* and Ray's *Charulata* (1964) is a rich study in adaptation. In both the texts the characters are central to the story and deeply nuanced in nature. Three main characters in Novella as well as film are Charulata, Bhupati, and Amal. Secondary characters but important in terms of their role in narrative are Umapada and Mandakini (Manda). While Braja is only present in the film. Charulata being the central to both the texts, her character has been portrayed with utmost care in order to drive the narrative. Tagore's prose delves deeply into Charulata's inner world through the description of thoughts and feelings reflecting upon her yearning for companionship and creative fulfilment. On the other hand, Ray uses visual cues, such as facial expressions, body language and interactions with her surroundings to convey Charulata's emotions. The iconic scene where Charulata peeping through the windows of the house using a binocular symbolizes her confined existence. In the text, Bhupati is preoccupied husband who is always engrossed in his political newspaper and intellectual pursuits while in the film he is physically and emotionally detached from Charulata. Although his actions are well-meaning but often clueless in nature. Amal is young, energetic and playful in both literary text as well as in film, however, Tagore has portrayed him as somewhat ambiguous figure while Ray used his body language and expression to convey an internal conflict. In both the cases, Amal is catalyst to Charu's happiness as well as reason of her loneliness. Umapada is Charulata's brother who is portrayed in both the text as opportunistic and deceitful. But in the literary text, he gave Bhupati the idea to open a newspaper. But in the film there is no such reference. That's why in literary text his betrayal is more emphasised than in the film. The character of Manda has been used as the contrast to Charulata in both the texts. Manda represents the traditional, socially accepted role of women, which contrasts with Charu's desire for intellectual and emotional fulfilment. Tagore's literary portrayal emphasizes the inner lives of his characters through introspection, while Ray's cinematic adaptation conveys emotions through *mise-en-scène*, cinematography, and music, achieving the same emotional resonance through different means. Both media complement each other, offering different lenses through which to understand the emotional and psychological complexity of the characters, particularly Charulata, whose silent longing and intellectual isolation remain central to both interpretations.

5.2.3. Identify Differences/Changes in the Cinematic Adaptation with Reference to their Original Literary Text

This objective highlights the differences between the literary text *Nastanirh* (*The Broken Nest*) by Rabindranath Tagore and its cinematic adaptation *Charulata* (1964) by Satyajit Ray in terms of setting, plot, conflict, characters, point of view, and theme.

An in-depth comparison of the cinematic adaptation of *Charulata* (1964), directed by Satyajit Ray, with the original literary text, *Nastanirh* (1901) by Rabindranath Tagore, reveals significant differences and changes. Tagore's *Nastanirh* is set in 19th-century colonial Bengal, predominantly in a large, traditional, upper-middle-class Bengali household. He published this novella in 1901, though its translator Mary M. Lago attributes the story to be in 1879 when Bengal renaissance was almost at its peak. Ray relocated the story almost 100 years after Tagore's version of the story. In the literary text, Tagore has given rich description of Charulata's isolation and claustrophobic nature of her surroundings while in the film Ray portrayed the home as a character in itself with meticulous art direction, set design and grand architecture where the space emphasizes Charulata's confinement and longing for freedom. Use of light, shadow and compositional elements are used to create a melancholic atmosphere to enhance the emotional tone of the story. Without relying on dialogue, Ray crafts a scene rich in symbolism. Perhaps the most iconic symbol, the binoculars frame Charu's desire to see beyond domestic confinement. The act of gazing outward reflects her intellectual curiosity and yearning for participation in the larger world. At the same time, the binoculars underscore her distance from that world, positioning her as a spectator of freedoms she cannot access. Tagore in the literary text has used linear narrative where plot unfolds gradually depicting Charulata's emotional journey and psychological depth. On the other hand, in the film the plot is slightly different from the literary text where the director has changed certain aspects to suit the medium of visual storytelling. Ray expands the temporal and emotional landscape of the story, offering extended sequences such as The garden swing externalises Charu's fluctuating emotions. The gentle oscillation symbolises her wavering between security and desire, tradition and aspiration. The sequence also visualises the rhythm of longing and repression, capturing a moment of fleeting liberation that remains circumscribed by domestic boundaries. Ray's cinematography in *Charulata* traces Charu's inner world. The sunlit moments in the garden contrast with the dim interiors of the mansion, reflecting oscillations between hope and isolation. Shadows falling across Charu's face often signal her psychological entrapment, while shafts of light suggest unfulfilled possibilities. Windows, corridors, and doorways function as visual metaphors of confinement. Charu is frequently shown framed by grills or doorways, underscoring her position as both enclosed and gazing outward. The house itself becomes a character, embodying the splendour of the bhadralok world and the restrictions imposed on women within it. Ray repeatedly deploys

silence as a narrative device. The unspoken between characters—particularly Charu and Amal—creates a space of emotional intensity more powerful than dialogue. The pauses, lingering gazes, and restrained gestures foreground repressed desire, demonstrating Ray's mastery of cinematic subtlety. Literature serves as both connection and constraint. Books represent Charu's intellectual affinity with Amal, while also highlighting the gap between her aspirations and societal limitations. The act of writing becomes symbolic of self-expression, which remains largely inaccessible to Charu as a woman of her time. Together, these symbols transform *Charulata* from a narrative of domestic isolation into a cinematic meditation on desire, confinement, and identity. Ray's adaptation thus operates not only at the level of plot but also at the level of form, where visual symbolism replaces Tagore's prose descriptions to articulate Charu's inner world. Also, ambiguity is present in the original literary text and in the film. However, at the end of the novella Bhupati leaves Charulata and in the film this situation is unresolved and the director has tried to keep open interpretation as per audience. The character of Charulata is static in both novella as well as in the film as her attitude of affection towards Amal remains consistent throughout the story. But Bhupati and Amal depict dynamic characteristics as the story progresses, they both change their thoughts about Charulata. Largely based upon Charulata's loneliness both the novella and film depict Charulata's struggle for emotional as well as intellectual fulfilment within the constraints of her marriage and societal norms. Tagore through writing and Ray through visual and auditory elements has gauged the themes of loneliness, desire and reconciliation.

6. Conclusions and Recommendation

The cinematic adaptation of *Charulata* (1964) by Satyajit Ray, based on Rabindranath Tagore's novella, *Nastanirh*, is widely regarded as one of the finest examples of literary adaptation in Indian cinema. While both *Nastanirh* and *Charulata* (1964) share the same core story and themes, they differ significantly in their treatment of narrative building. The novella relies on third-person omniscient narrator but the film uses visual storytelling, with emphasis on cinematic techniques. In novella, the plot is secondary and the narrative is built upon the interrelationship between the characters with linear progression. On the other hand, Ray has made some small changes in the plot of the film like fishy character of Umapada, inclusion of Braja and an open-ended conclusion. The characterization in *Nastanirh* and its cinematic adaptation *Charulata* (1964) reveals the subtle differences in how both the media handle emotional and intellectual complexity of the characters. Tagore's novella provides a deep psychological insight into Charulata, Amal, and Bhupati through narrative exposition, while Ray's adaptation relies on visual storytelling, using cinematic techniques to convey the characters' emotions and relationships. Both versions explore the

themes of loneliness, unfulfilled desire, and the constraints of societal expectations, but Ray's adaptation highlights the unspoken emotional undercurrents with more immediacy and intensity. While *Nastanirh* remains an intimate exploration of inner lives through prose, *Charulata* uses the visual power of cinema to externalize the same emotional landscapes, making the characters more accessible to the audience through their gestures, expressions, and silences. The characters in both works remain timeless, resonating with audiences through their universal themes of love, loneliness, and ambiguity. Ray's adaptation is not merely a translation of the text; it is a creative reinterpretation that introduces new elements and perspectives. Ray adds scenes that have no direct counterpart in the novella but enhance the narrative. For instance, the use of binocular shows Charulata's loneliness and yearning for freedom and the symbolic use of swing sequence shows her emotional highs and lows. In conclusion, *Charulata* (1964) stands as a testament to the power of adaptation, showcasing how a director's creative vision can breathe new life into a literary text while honouring its essence. Ray's ability to translate Tagore's nuanced exploration of human emotions and relationships into a visual and auditory masterpiece ensures that *Charulata* (1964) remains a timeless work of art, celebrated for its narrative complexity, emotional depth, and cinematic brilliance.

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