“Dori Dhore Maro Taan / Raja Hobe Khan Khan”: A Marxist Study of Ray’s Film Hirak Rajar Deshe

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ABSTRACT
From the very uncalendered past of society when system of production started its journey, automatically ‘class-struggle’ started to accompany it. Class-struggle is everywhere. In the age of slavery there was class struggle between slave-owners and slaves, in the age of Feudalism the class-struggle was between landowners and serfs and in capitalist society there is also class-struggle between Bourgeoisie and Proletariat. Lower class people or working class people or Proletariat people are always suppressed and oppressed by upper class people or the capitalists. This is the major aspect of Marxism. This Marxist approach is very much there in the Film Hirak Rajar Deshe directed by Satyajit Ray.

Keywords: Class-Struggle, Capitalist Society, System of Production, Bourgeoisie and Proletariat, Marxism.

“Marxist criticism has the longest history. Karl Marx himself made important general statements about culture and society in the 1850s. It is correct to think of Marxist criticism as a 20th century phenomenon” (Selden, Widdowson, and Broker 82). Marxism depends on temporal – spatial reality. The appropriation and application of it entirely depends on the consideration of time and place. Marxism is very much open to change. Karl Marx opines for a change for the betterment. It is a progressive philosophy. Marxism is materialistic philosophy. It is a reaction to Rene Descartes’ ‘Ego cogito Ergo Sum’ (I think, therefore I exist) is challenged by Marx. Marx’s argument is that I exist, therefore I think. Marxist world is materialistic world where struggle for existence determines thinking. It is a scientific approach to society. It has no closure. Actually Marx’s point is that “It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness” (Bertens 78).

Marxist theory shows that in a capitalist society there are two classes - Bourgeoisie and Proletariat. System of production creates these two classes. Lower class people or the Proletariat people are always suppressed and oppressed by the capitalists, the upper class people. “Within capitalism, a worker, or a member of proletariat, is forced to sell his or her labour power for a wage to a company that owns the tools or means of production” (Klages 51).

The film Hirak Rajar Deshe is written and directed by Satyajit Ray and produced by the Government of West Bengal. It was released in 1980. Actually this film is a sequel to Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne (released in 1969). This film is based on a short story written by Ray’s grandfather Upendrakishore Raychowdhury. Hirak Rajar Deshe is the second film of ‘Goopy and Bagha Trilogy’. The third film, Goopy Bagha Phire Elo, is directed by Sandip Ray, son of Satyajit Ray. Basically, Hirak Rajar Deshe is a film for children who are less intelligent than mature human beings. Ray very beautifully presents Goopy (Tapen Chetterjee) and Bagha (Rabi Ghosh). Goopy loves to sing and he requests other people who listen to his song not to move. This is very interesting. This feature helps Goopy and Bagha very much. Bagha loves to play with dhol (drum like musical instrument). When Goopy sings, Bagha plays his dhol. These two characters are wonderful duo.

At the beginning of the film Hirak Rajar Deshe, Goopy and Bagha introduced themselves through a song. They are given three boons by king of Ghosts and with the help of these boons they became sons-in-law of the kings of Shundi and Halla. They talk about their luxurious lives. They are invited to an annual festival by the king of Diamonds.

Goopi and Bagha went there in the disguise of common men. Accidentally, they met with Udayan Pandit (Soumitra Chatterjee). Udayan Pandit told them the real condition of the kingdom of Diamonds. The king of this land (Utpal Dutta) is not a good king, he is very tyrannical. All the subjects of this land are suppressed and oppressed by the king. Nobody will protest against him. If anyone tries to protest, he is brainwashed by a machine (‘Jantar mantar’) invented by a royal-scientist. The king had tried to brainwash the teacher Udayan Pandit but he escaped. Now the teacher wanted to revolt against the tyrannical king. Goopy and Bagha joined with him and with the help of their magic Udayan Pandit becomes successful to pull the king down from his kingship.
The king, whose role had been played by Utpal Dutta, wanted to control the farmers in his land and the workers of his Diamond mines, because farmers and workers are the base of his economy. One farmer (Fazal Miya) came to the palace in order to complain against taxes, he states his pathetic condition by saying that the last year was adverse, crops were not so good, he has a wife and children, they barely get two square meals a day and he had to pay the money lender. In this situation, if he pays taxes, they will not survive. In response to this, the king ordered the state-poet to say something.

Baki rakha khajna (Keeping taxes pending is)
Mote valo kaj na (Certainly not a good thing)
Bhorpet Nao Khai (Even if you don’t eat food)
Raj kar dea chai (you must pay tax). (From subtitle of the film)

He is taken to the laboratory for brain wash. Then a miner (Balaram) entered the palace, and states his situation that mining of diamonds is a very difficult work. He cannot work continuously, his body aches. The king asked if he has not been paid for this, Balram replied that was not enough for his stomach; moreover there is torture of whip. In the same way the king ordered the state-poet to for his speech.

Je kore khonite shrom(One who works in a mine)
Jeno tare dore jom (The angel of death fears the man)
Anahare nahi khed (No harm in eating less)
Besi khele bare med (eating more results in obesity).

Balaram was also taken to the laboratory for brain-wash. Later he praises the king. The king tried to control the teacher by the machine, jantarmantar. But the teacher (Udayan Pandit) escapes from his dutch. The king wanted to control the farmer and workers because they are the sources of his economy. They are base. Economy is the base and the other things like education, law, family, love, politics, religion etc are superstructure. Udayan Pandit is a teacher and here he is related to superstructure of the society. Here one can point that “(1) There is a ‘relative autonomy’ of the superstructure with respect to the base; (2) there is a reciprocal action of the superstructure on the base” (Althusser 130). That is why the king wanted to control both the base and the superstructure.

In the film Hirak Rajar Deshe, farmers and workers of diamond mines worked hard day by day. They are compelled to hand over their product to the powerful king. They are alienated from their products. They are deprived from their own product and their labour power as well. This is called ‘alienation effect’. "The worker takes raw materials and uses tools to create something that can be sold for more than the value of raw material and the worker’s wages; this is called surplus value" (Klages 52). This surplus value goes to the hands of capitalists or upper class people.

When Fazal Miya protests against the taxes, he is taken to the laboratory and is brainwashed. After coming out of the laboratory he praises the king by saying the king of Hirak is no less a God. The same thing happened to Balram, a worker of the Diamond mine. He is also brainwashed by the machine, jantarmantar, which is invented by a royal- scientist. What ISAs (Ideological State Apparatuses) do to men, the machine, jantar mantar is doing the same. ISAs are different from RSA. According to Althusser, ISAs are plural in number, work in private domain and functioned by ideology. He further says that churches, Parties, Trade Unions, families, some schools, most newspapers, cultural ventures, etc, are private and ISAs work in this domain (Althusser 136).

In the film ‘jantarmantar’ is used to change the opinion of farmers and workers in the diamond mines. Without any violence, all the workers of the mines are loyal to the king; farmers are also subdued by the king. The workers know that they are suppressed and oppressed by the king of Hirak. From Balram’s speech one comes to know that the works in the mine is very hard, they are paid little wages which are not enough for their stomach, there is also tortures of the royal guards, but they did not protest because of they are brainwashed by the machine. They are compelled to work hard.

One singer (charandas) came to the palace to complain against the royal guards because they had ordered him not to sing. The song of charan Das (Which is sung by Amar Pal) presents the real condition of the state. The King ordered him to sing again, at first he is enjoys the song and later he becomes angry knowing about the real status of the King. The song of Charan Das is about the reality.

Valo jone rollo vanga ghore (The good people live in broken houses)
Mondo je se sinhasone chore (The rotten one sits on the throne )
Sonar Fasal Folai je tar (One who grows golden crops)
Dui bela jote na ahar (doesn’t get two square meals)
Hirar khonir mojur hoe (Being labourer in the mines of diamond)
The king of Hirak ordered to stop singing. He ordered the royal guards to tie him up and throw him in a ditch. The king of Hirak is tyrannical king. If anyone speaks against him, he is tortured. Common masses (like Fazal Miya, Balram and Charan Das) have no right to speak. Only the king, his ministers, Goopy, Bagha and Udayan Pandit are talking. Lower class people have not been given the opportunity to talk.

One important feature in this film is that everyone speaks in rhyme, except Udayan Pandit (Soumitra Chatterjee). It clearly shows that Udayan Pandit is different from others. All the ministers always agreed with the king, they always say ‘Thik, Thik’ (Right Right). But Udayan Pandit speaks in normal way; it suggests that he is a free thinker. Education Minister came to the school and speaks that the school is closed from today. The king thought that there is no need of education of the children of his subjects.

**The King:** Ora joto besi pore, (The more they study)
Toto besi jane, (The more they know and)
Toto kom mane. (The lesser they follow orders).

Udayan Pandit says to his students that the school will reopen one day, he will reopen it. Sometimes Ray himself is talking through Udayan Pandit.

Ray’s critic Chidananda Dusgupta said “Calcutta of the burning trams, the communal riots, refugees, unemployment, rising prices and food shortages does not exist in Ray’s film” (72). This charge is not just.

Ray shows violence in the film Hirak Rajar Deshe. Education minister came to Udayan Pandit and says that the school will be closed that day, all the books of Udayan Pandit are burnt; his father is tortured by the royal guards. In a scene we can see that houses of poor are burnt, their clothes are burnt. These are examples of violence. Ray had experienced the partition of India (1947), and the riots between Hindu Muslim, and he gives a touch of that violence in the film Hirak Rajar Deshe.

Marxism is all about equality. One can notice that in a school Udayan Pandit teaches both the Hindu and Muslim students. They are Subrata, Bhanu, Shoudas, Pradeep, Mihir and Alam, Karim, Ali and Rashid. The teacher teaches all the students equally. We also see that in the place among the royal guests there are Hindu and Muslim guests and they are all welcomed with diamond rings equally by the Hirak Raj. Equality between the two castes is shown here. Marxism always speaks for equality. Ray had experience of the violence between Hindu and Muslims during the partition of India (1947). He had seen how these two castes became violent to each other, how they became cruel to each other. Ray’s message is that if these two castes want to live together, they can live as they had lived peacefully for a long time before partition. That is why, in Udayan Pandit’s school, Ray presents two kinds of pupil both Hindu and Muslims and they are learning side by side.

Before royal guests are invited to the Kingdom of Diamonds, the king ordered the Defense Minister to remove all the signs of poverty from the path that leads to the palace. As a result of this the royal guards remove all the unpleasant things and poverty. The royal guards destroy the tents of the poor and they are taken to a small place by the guards. Here Ray shows a cage which suggests that all the poor people are kept in a small place which almost looks like a cage. “Ray was willing to associate the scene in the film in which the king’s soldiers drive away all the poor people so that visitors will not see them with the bulldozing of the slums in Delhi and others cities during Indira Gandhi’s 1975–77 Emergency” (Robinson 201). Ray himself has said that “this particular scene is based on his own observation of the Government’s attempt to cover up the scenes of urban poverty along the route taken by Soviet leaders during a state visit to Calcutta” (Nyce 177). In that particular time, poor urban people were kept in a small prison as if they were kept in a cage. This experience Ray used in the film Hirak Rajar Deshe.

The Naxalite movement emerged in May 1967 at a place called ‘Naxalbury’ in the state of Bengal. The initial purpose of this movement was to abolish feudal system in Indian Villages and to free the poor from the cruel landlords. Despite the rise in followers of the movement with rural India, the Naxalbury was crushed in 1972 by the police under the Government in Bengal (Banerjee 20). So many people died of it. Everywhere the violent activates were seen. It has left deep impressions reflecting those changes, you couldn’t make a film’ (Robinson 204). Probably for this reason he had depicted a scene of violence where Udayan Pandit’s books are burnt, all village people’s houses are destroyed to hide poverty in Hirak Rajar Deshe.

Food is necessary for survival. Lower class people, workers, proletariat people are working hard because of food. Though they know that they are suppressed and oppressed by the upper class people, they went to work day after day because they know that without food they will not survive. Proletariat people struggle for food, for survival. Ray had experience of a famine. Bengal Famine of 1943 had occurred and because of this famine so many people died from starvation and malnutrition (web n.p.). In Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne, the
first film of "Goopy and Bagha Trilogy" Ray shows that with the help of food, Goopy and Bagha became successful to stop the war between Shundi and Halla. In Hirak Rajar Deshe, Ray gives the touch of food. Goopy and Bagha are very happy while consuming food on the bank of pond. When Charan Das is released by Goopy and Bagha, he wants a glass of milk because he was hungry and had not eaten anything for a long time.

In Marxism, capitalists or elite class people always want to gain power and retain their glory. In the film Hirak Rajar Deshe this approach is seen through the activities of Hirak Raj. He builds his huge statue and placed it in the middle of the ground. It shows how much he is a strong and powerful king. The statue shows his self-glorification as well. He placed it in the middle of the ground as if he is always observing his subjects’ activities. His subjects are always under surveillance. When his statue is unveiled, one student of Udayan Pandit hits the statue with a catapult and breaks the nose of the statue. It is very insulting to the powerful king in that moment. He considered it to be Udayan Pandit’s plan. This activity is a kind of protest from the lower class people against the upper class.

There are no major women characters in the film Hirak Rajar Deshe. In the previous film, Goopy Gyne and Bagha Byne, Goopy and Bagha became successful to stop the war between Shundi and Halla. They are given two gorgeous women (Manimala, the princess of Shundi and Muktamala, the princess of Halla). Goopy and Bagha got the chance to choose the women whom they marry. But the two princesses did not get the opportunity to choose their bridegrooms. They are given to Goopy and Bagha as gifts because the duo stops the war. The two women are used as objects. If the condition of the Princess is marginalized, what about the other common women? In Hirak Rajar Deshe, there is only one female character and she is Udayan’s mother (Alpana Gupta). When the royal guards burned Udayan’s books and tortured his father, that woman appeared. She was re presented as a helpless woman who was crying at the situation, not at all powerful woman. 'Even Marxism, with its wide ranging historical theorizing had largely ignored the position of women' (Bertens 85).

In a capitalist society proletarian women are doubly suppressed and oppressed than the proletarian men. Women suffered much more than the men. Ray was painfully aware of the status of Indian women at that time and this concern is visible in his films (Cooper 75).

State is responsible for Udayan’s rebellious activities. Udayan Pandit (Soumitra Chatterjee) is a talented man and working as a teacher. His talent is not appreciated by the king. Instead of praising his talent, the king ordered him to close the school. The king thought that because of the help of education, human minds will begin to think what is going on around them. The Minister of Education came to Udayan’s school and said that the school is closed from now. The state-poet recites his poem as usual.

Lakhapore kore jei (One who studies too much)  
Anahare more sei (dies of starvation)  
Janar kono shes nai (There is no end to knowledge)  
Janar chesta britha tai. (therefore, it is futile trying to learn)  
Bidyae lave loksan (knowledge is just a waste)  
Nai artho, nai maan. (Nothing to gain, no respect too.)  
Hirak raja budhiman (The king of Hirak is intelligent)  
Koro sobe tar joyo gaan. (Everyone sings his praise.)

The king not only closed his school but by his order the royal guests burned all his books, tortured his parents. The king tries to control his brain with the machine, jantar mantar but Udayan Pandit fled away. Ray penned with audio-visual effect how a good, talented person becomes a terrorist.

The songs of the film are very interesting. Anup Ghosal sings all the songs in the film “Hirak Rajar Deshe” except the song of Charan Das which is sung by Amar Pal. The film begins with Goopy’s song – ‘mora dujonai rajar jamai’ (We are both sons-in-law of the king). The real status of the king came to the light through the song of Charan Das. The king is not at all a good, benevolent king; he is an evil man who tortures his peasants and labourers. Charan Das reveals the exact condition of the Kingdom.

Valo jone roilo vanga ghore , (The good people live in broken houses)  
Mondo je se sinhasone chore . (The rotten one sits on the throne)  
Sonar fasal folai je tar , (One who grows the golden crops)  
Dui bela jote na ahar . (does not get two square meals)  
Hirer khonir mojur hoe , (Being labourer in the mines of diamond)  
Kanakori nai . (They have no money) (Subtitle)
Chandan Das is punished by the king. At the ending of the film, when Goopy and Bagha were ready to steal the royal treasury, they saw a powerful royal guard. Goopy started to sing - 'dhoro nako mantirimosai (don’t catch me mantrimosai)'. When they escape from the guard’s hands and entered into the room where royal treasury boxes are kept safely, they saw tigress as a guard of the key. Bagha simply said to Goopy to sing but Goopy’s throat was choked, though later he could sing:

'paye pori bagh mama (We both bow to you)
'Tumi je a ghore k ta janto' (Who knew you guard here).

The main message of the film comes from Goopy’s mouth – ‘nohi jantra' (we are not machines). Ray himself was talking about the songs.

'They are my songs if you come to think of it' said Ray in 1980s. I have definitely set a style of singing which does not come from Tagore, does not come from western music, but which is essentially me’ (Robinson 195).

At the ending of the film, the royal scientist takes diamonds as bribes from Goopy and Bagha (Issue of corruption comes here). Instead of brainwashing the teacher and his students, the scientist brainwashed the king and his companions. The speech of the teacher is very important – ‘anachar koro Jodi (If you do wrong) / Raja tobe charo godi (It’s the right time to leave the throne )’. It is one of the main messages of the film that whenever the king is evil and he will exploit his subjects the only way to get rid of the overpowering clutch of the king is revolt. Only revolution can change everything. In the film the revolution is bloodless revolution. No one is killed, with the help of the magic of Goopy and Bagha and the brain washing machine Udayan Pandit became successful to dethrone the king. The King (Utpal Dutta) himself says ‘dori dhore maro tan (Pull the ropes now ) \ Raja hobe khan khan. (The king will lie in pieces).

'To Utpal Dutta, the Marxist producer, playwright and actor who played the king, the film was out and out political' (Robinson 189). Though Ray himself did not accept that notion. The film is purely political and Marxist theory can be easily applied in the film. In a fantasy or in a film, it is easy to show that with the help of bloodless revolution one can make a class-less society but in reality is it possible? Injustice and inequality still exist in the society. With the help of the magic of Goopy and Bagha, Udayan Pandit becomes successful to make a classless society. Though it is a question how much is it applicable to this society ,but it shows a way of change - a change eternal, a change which will break the barriers and create an equal society without suppression and oppression.

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Web Resources
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