

FILM

TWO

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Satyajit Ray's "Two" (1964, Bengali, b/w, 15 mins) is a film fable on a rich child and a poor child. As Soumendu Roy's camera moves up from a ground level to a higher plane, the viewer is confronted by a little boy on a varandah, sipping a fizzy drink from a bottle. The child is from affluence, and waves at a car, moving out from the compound. Others in the large mansion are never revealed. The little boy kicks a big rubber ball, sinks into a sofa, and plays with books. Loneliness stalks, as the little boy looks at the ceiling, punches balloons, and lights and blows out match sticks. A balloon is burnt off. Moving to another room, the little boy puts on a cap, and bags a sword on his left side. He plays with toys, and blows into a toy clarinet.

Soon the rich little boy, spots a poor little boy in the open fields, carrying a flute. The poor village boy brings a small neck slung drum, beats the drum and jumps with rhythms. An array of toys glide. The rich boy flaunts a mechanical toy monkey, playing bongo drums. The poor village boy adorns a mask, and dances with bows and arrows. Putting on a mask, the rich boy waves a sword, and fires a toy gun. The dejected village boy walks away. From a window with iron bars, the rich boy sights a kite being flown by the poor, rural boy. He takes a sling and aims at the kite; but misses. He ports a moustache painted. Now he loads gun, and aims at the kite. Toy gun blast brings down the kite. The village boy is sad and pulls the kite with a string, on the ground. The kite is torn. The rich boy eats apples and plays with his toy trumpet, while the poor, pastoral boy walks away with his torn kite.

While friendship is never attained between the rich child and the poor child, shortly after the poor child's kite is torn, sounds of the poor child's flute reappear on the sound track, and the toy robots of the rich child develop malfunctioning. There is authenticity of the inner rooms and furniture of the mansion, as created by Bansi Chandragupta's sets. Soumendu Roy's camera, full of mobile pans, sympathetically draws the character of the rich child (Ravi Kiran). Satyajit Ray's flowing images delineate the gulf between rich and poor, class divisions, and competitiveness amongst children. Both children have been left alone by their families. Urban consumer toys and rural artifices become instruments of proud possession, and threatening weaponry. Without any fantastical sequences, the embodiments of the children and the two children's eyeball scaring images, dramatize children's psychology in an adult world, structured by wealth and deprivations. The restored version of the film was screened at the Kolkata Film Festival (November, 2008). □□□