

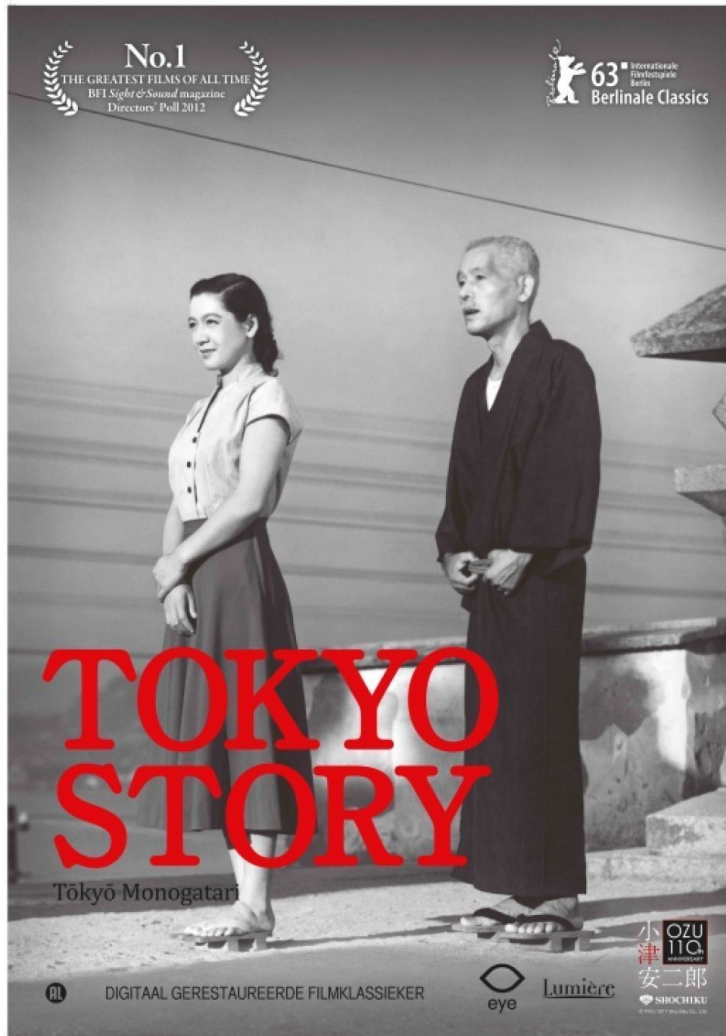
Perspectives of World Cinemas (DE 410)

Film Review by Himanshu Upreti (173059004)

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# Yasujirō Ozu

## Tokyo Story



Director - Yasujirō Ozu

Release year - 1953

## **Plot:**

The movie is directed by Yasujiro Ozu. It is family drama. A retired couple Sukichi and Tomi live in the town in southwest Japan with their daughter who is a primary school teacher. They have five adult children, out of which four are alive. The old couple come to city Tokyo to visit their children and grandchildren. The grown children and their spouses have carved out lives of their own, and it very quickly becomes apparent that they are far more interested in those concerns than they are in meeting the burden of pretending to be interested in their mother and father. Only the widowed daughter-in-law showed some interest and gave her time to the old couple. Ultimately, Noriko becomes the symbol for Shūkichi and Tomi of the striking cultural contrast between tradition and modernity and between simple small town life and the hustle and bustle of the overpopulated urban jungle.

While at the resort, Tomi's frail health takes a turn for the worst; the result is she dies not long after returning home. This turn of events also results in a twist of plot: now it is the big city kids who are forced to come to the small town. The stay is as short as they can get away with; respects are paid and soon they are off on their way back to the big city.

All leave except for Noriko, who stays behind to care for Shūkichi and provide comfort. The newly widowed father-in-law reveals that he is not in need of comfort and is content to live a solitary life; he has achieved a wistful acceptance of the impermanence of the existence.

## **Minimalism**

The Japanese Cinema is complete opposite of new french wave. The general notion of minimalism includes not moving the camera too much, no changes in height and lens of camera. If colors are not handled it will look garrish. For example if there is movement in an Ozu film, it comes from nature or people, not from the camera.

## **Analysis of the movie**

- Tokyo Story also exemplifies Ozu's unique style—low camera height, 180 degree cuts, virtually no camera movements, and shots linked through overlapping bits of space. In dialogue scenes, Ozu seldom cuts away from a speaking character.
- It would be easy to sentimentalize the father, Shukichi, for instance, but when he staggers back drunk from his reunion, Shige remarks that he's reverted to his old ways. The implication is that his carousing once caused family problems.
- The dominant theme of Tokyo Story is the generational conflict between parents and their children. It depicts the visit of an elderly couple who come to Tokyo where they wish to spend time with their adult children, and their families, and the widowed spouse of another son who was killed in the war.

- Ozu's gentle approach to storytelling is also visible in the movie. It is an open narrative, in that there is no great all encompassing resolution, and none of the characters are delineated as being 'good' or 'bad', with the possible exception of their widowed daughter-in-law Noriko (played by regular Ozu actor Setsuko Hara) who is one of the most heartbreakingly kind and generous characters to ever appear on screen.
- Conversations in films are typically shot in the shot-reverse-shot pattern where the camera is placed over the shoulder of the character that is speaking. This gives the impression of a naturally flowing conversation that the audience witness from a detached position.
- However the director of this movie places his camera right between the two people conversing and films each person directly so that the audience feel that they are standing in the middle of the conversation and are being addressed directly by the characters.

## **Conclusions**

The overall watch of was pleasant, serene and leaves the viewer in the state of thoughtfulness. It is distinctly Japanese film, depicting the sad inevitability that children develop a degree of selfishness in order to become independent from their parents. One can easily relate the movie to Bollywood movie Baghban.