

### **Movie Critique: Jun Ichikawa's Tony Takitani**

Tony Takitani is a very unique movie adapted from Haruki Murakami's short story by the same name. The story attempts to portray various psychological states of human beings in their extremes, such as loneliness, love, compulsions and grief which make it a movie very rich in content.

From a delivery point of view is a new genre of cinema, where an attempt has been made to use more narrative than dialogues and lower emotional histrionics. Even the saddest parts of the movie have been dealt with objectivity. The cinematography is innovative in that it transitions from one scene to another in a similar fashion as pages of the book turn. The choice of colors is also symbolic of the low key life that Tony leads for the major part in the story.

In the sections below we discuss the various psychological states and disorders which the characters in the movie display. These form the cornerstone of the story and are depicted in an outstanding manner.

#### **Extreme Loneliness**

Tony has a very abnormal childhood with his mother passing away a few days after he was born and a father who is away touring as he is part of a music band. In fact, the story shows how Tony's father was also a lonesome character after he returned from Shanghai to Tokyo after the Pacific War was over.

In the absence of his parents, Tony lives alone. The author has shown how lack of parental support can lead to a lack of confidence in the child and make him/her restrained within the limits of his comfort zone. An important reason for his loneliness turns out to be his American name which some people go mad at. This aggravates his low confidence and makes him avoid interaction with people of his age. The cold scene which shows Tony asking his caretaker to stop coming shows how Tony wants to avoid intrusion in his life to the extent possible.

### **Lack of Emotions**

The movie portrays how being all alone and without being loved can lead to an attitude which is devoid of emotions. Tony's love for art makes him take up sketching and painting. However, his drawings show zero emotions and "warmth." His emphasis is on detail, accuracy and preciseness rather than on emotions. He is unable to appreciate the work of others which portray emotions, perhaps because he has never experienced them. Tony uses terms such as "inaccurate" and "immature" to describe paintings which depict human emotion clearly reinforcing the idea that emotions and love are alien to him because of the lonely life he has led.

By depicting his inclination to draw precise illustrations the movie tries to show how Tony wants to shape his life devoid of emotions.

### **From the Emotional Void to Love**

The story shows how Tony finally falls in love but the movie successfully questions whether it was Tony's love for Eiko, or was it is fetish with gracefulness with which Eiko dressed up and carried herself. In fact when Tony's father asks what does he likes in Eiko, Tony has nothing to say but that he likes the way she dresses! Perhaps Tony's only appreciation of Eiko at that point in time is her accuracy in dressing up and gracefulness rather than her personality or sexuality.

However, things change after Eiko and Tony get married. For the first time ever Tony's life becomes vibrant and this is depicted beautifully by the character that plays Tony. Tony fears loneliness and does not want to ever return to the lonely life he led before marriage. He cares for Eiko and wants her to be happy, showing that finally he experiences love in his life. In fact in one of the scenes Tony admits how he has recognized the importance of relationships only after Eiko has come in his life.

Tony's love for Eiko is also shown when he gets angry when Eiko's previous boyfriend calls Eiko a "chic" and a "painful person". Tony's worry for her mental health also shows that an emotional bond has developed between Tony and Eiko.

### **Compulsive behavior and obsession**

One of the important psychological states depicted in compulsive behavior and obsession. Eiko is shown as a shopaholic character that cannot resist the temptation to buy new beautiful and expensive clothes. As time passes this addiction reaches serious proportions as Eiko cannot

control herself even for a week's time to avoid shopping. The most tragic moment in the movie comes because of Eiko's compulsive drive to buy clothes. She loses control and with her mind occupied with new clothes she rams her car resulting in her demise. This extremely sad moment brings a tragic change in Tony's life.

Eiko's death followed by Tony's father's demise leaves Tony in loneliness again as these were the only human beings with whom Tony had any relationship. Tony's drive to design his life accurately continues when he gives an advertisement to hire an assistant who accurately fits into Eiko's clothes. Hisako the new hire, fits exactly into Eiko's clothes and shoes, giving Tony the hope that he can regain his lost life back or forget about Eiko.

Tony's behavior thereafter shows shades of compulsion. Tony seems to be trying hard to transform Hisako into Eiko by asking her to buy new clothes, coats etc. which Hisako does not really need!

However, Tony is finally able to get rid of his compulsions and finally gets rid of all of Eiko's clothes as well as his Dad's trombone which are the only memories left from the people he shared some time with. One compulsion leads to another and Tony again becomes obsessed with Hisako with the last scene showing him attempting to call Hisako back.

### **What could have been better?**

The movie has touched me personally as it has helped develop and understanding of what drives lonely people like Tony and how compulsive disorders can influence life. However, the movie

could have been richer by adding detail to the character of Hisako. There were many questions I had in mind about Hisako's feelings which were left unanswered, perhaps an intentional ploy by the director and the book's author. The breaking down of Hisako could not have been just because it was the first time she had seen beautiful clothes. Perhaps she realized that death can coldly take away the best possessions of humans which led to her tears. Her feelings towards Tony, her feelings towards clothes (love or hatred?) are things that could have added more color and emotional richness to the movie.

Further, the movie could be too objective for the general audience's taste. The only part where grief has been depicted is when Tony cries after the demise of Eiko. This is one of the few touching scenes in the movie. Some more of such scenes could have made the audience relate to the characters and the stories better.

## References

Ishida, M. (Producer), & Ichikawa, J. (Director). (2004). *Tony Takitani* [Motion picture]. Japan: Breath, Wilco Co.

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