



Satyajit Ray: A Film Director and Filmmaker

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ABSTRACT

Satyajit Ray is well known as one of the greatest film directors or filmmakers in the world. He directed thirty-six movies, of which there are twenty-nine feature films, five documentary films, and two short films. He was inspired by a Hollywood film named 'Bicycle Thieves', also known as 'The Bicycle Thief', directed by Italian film director Vittorio de Sica during his trip to London. Returning to India, Ray made his ultimate decision to make his first film, 'Pather Panchali (Song of the Little Road) (1995)'. He became famous for his three films, 'Pather Panchali(1995)', 'Aparajito' (1956), 'Apu pur Sangsar' (also known as the Apu Trilogy. The Apu Trilogy is one of his masterpieces. This paper aims to bring up Satyajit Ray's contribution and his reflections on the Indian film industry.

Keywords: Pather Panchali, Satyajit Ray, Tradition, Modernity, Hollywood film industry, Apu Trilogy.

1. Introduction:

Satyajit Ray (1921–1992) directed thirty-six films, including feature films, documentary films, and short films. Besides being a fiction writer, illustrator, and graphic artist, he was also a publisher, composer, and film critic. Ray and his films received so many popular and prestigious awards in the film industry, including the 32nd Indian National Film Award and the Bharat Ratna Award from the Government of India. Satyajit Ray is also the only Indian recipient of an Oscar for Lifetime Achievement (Ray, 2013). In 1963, in "Calm Without, Fire Within" (Our Films, Their Films), Ray's formative years were referred to by him at the University of Rabindranath Tagore in Santiniketan. For learning the Chinese calligraphy rudiments, Ray writes:

"We rubbed our sticks of Chinese ink on porcelain palettes, dipped our bamboo steamed Japanese brushes in them, and held them poised perpendicularly over mounted sheets of Nepalese parchment. 'Now draw a tree', our professor Bose would say (Bose was a famous Bengali painter who made pilgrimages to China and Japan). 'Draw a tree, but not in the western fashion, not from the top downwards. The stroke must be from the base upwards.'" (Cooper, 2000)

Satyajit Ray is one of the greatest twentieth-century fictionists of cinema, a writer, a Bengali film director, and an illustrator, and he set Indian cinema's new standard as well. Among his works, the Apu Trilogy: Pather Panchali (Song of the Little Road) (1995), Aparajito (The Unvanquished) (1956), and Apu Sansar (The World of Apu) (1959) are the paradigms of his masterpiece. His work received admiration for its humanism. Attention to detail, versatility, and the skill of using music in his film. He was praised not only as a film director but also as a critical and intellectual writer. His writings mirror a wide-ranging grasp of history, precision, aesthetics, and culture (Ray, 2013).

Satyajit Ray's work is hugely concerned with ideology and is noted for its profuseness of humanism. British colonialism and Indian nationhood deeply marked his film and stories, and his film has a distinctively Bengali variety of liberalism.

Ray grew up in a nationalist milieu and nationalism, and the preoccupation with colonialism marked Ray's earliest unrecorded scripts and was emphasised by him, which shows mature works by Ray that continued to combine an anti-colonial viewpoint and stirring perspective on the nationhood of India and a manifest commitment to the culture of the cosmopolitan with the case studies of Charulata (1962), Kanchenjunga (1962), First Class Kamra (1981), Agantuk (1991), Pratidwandi (1970), and Robertsoner Rubi (1992) (Sengoopta, 2011).

2. Ray's Perspective between Tradition and Modernity:

"Avant-gardism is a luxury we cannot yet afford in our country."

– SATYAJIT RAY, *Our Films, Their Films*
(Ganguli, 2010)

As a man, Ray's life is centred around his relationships, just like a traditional Indian. Most of his creative preoccupations revolve around family relationships. Only four films of his have aberrantly followed this customary pattern: *Nayak* (1965–66), *The Postmaster* (a short film), *Abhijan* (1962), and *Gupi Gyne* (1968–69). Ray's film contains the history of an old generation of families that reflects the changes in Bengal. Satyajit Ray's film has a changeless background that contains bamboo groves, a landscape of coconut forests, and spreading raintrees, reflecting a lush greenness in the tanks of the eternal temple around which the lineage or family dwellings have clustered (Seton, 2003).

"I am taking the cinema more seriously" was written to Clare by Ray in 1948. He used to have an admiration for stars, but after graduating from Shantiniketan, he turned into a focused director. He began to make 'hierographic notes' especially in the dark on the various cutting methods of the Americans (Robinson, 2010).

2.1. Tradition, culture and Modernity in Satyajit Ray's Film:

In the famous film of Satyajit Ray, *Pather Panchali* (1955), multiple senses of time inaugurate the sequence of Apu's excitement of sighting rail and train, and the relationship between Sarbajaya and the grandaunt Indir is inward, inanimate, and conflicted. In fact, Sarbajaya had to expel her from the household because of family endurance. Finally, Indir leaves the Ray house out of encompassing and dwarfing nature, and there she will find her final resting place (Vasudeban, 2001).

In *Pather Panchali*, Ray introduced the neo-realist tradition, which actually uses non-actors and shoots on location by using an undecorated style of photography. The novel *Pather Panchali* by Bibhutibhusan Bandhyopadhyay, from which the plot, overall theme, and characters were adopted by Satyajit Ray, was a sprawling saga, very traditional and simple, whose leisurely deonument caught the perfect rhythm of rural Bengal in the 19s (Sen). The governing principle of naturalism has been celebrated carefully in this film. Though it is a pretence of naturalism whose high investment is equipped formally and displaced by the viewer's concentration and attention on the emotions and perspectives of the character rather than what frames them (Vasudeban, 2001),.

The film *Aparajito* (1957) by Satyajit Ray is located in Benaras, a spiritual and cultural city in the northcentral part of India. This film is the second in the *Apu Trilogy series* by Satyajit Ray. The first one is *Pather Panchali* (1954), which is already discussed above, and the third masterpiece of this series is *Apur Sangsar* (1960). This trilogy has been a popular allegory and shows the struggle and journey of a boy (Apu) who belongs to an Indian hierarchical ordinary family and hence to the reign of modernity. The set of *Aparajitos* in Benaras is one third. Here Ray shows Apu's life (about age 9) with his parents Hrihar and Sarbojaya in Banaras, and after his father's death, Apu leaves Banaras with his mother (Mehndiratta, 2002). So Ray's modernity reaches everyone with another kind of narrative if the earlier narrative can be questioned successfully, as the movement of development can be described very well in the mid-fifties of the last century. (Battacharya, 2006) Thus, Ray's perspective on the new generation and society has been reflected through the composition of culture, tradition, and modernity in his film.

2.2. Hollywood Influence in Ray's Cinema:

Ray has been hugely influenced by the Hollywood industry as well, which tends to make Bengal into a modern film industry. As the British filmmaker and critic Lindsay Anderson once said, "I would compare Satyajit Ray to Eisenstein, Chaplin, Kurosawa, Bergman, and Antonioni. He is among the greatest in the world of cinema." In 1978, he was adjudged one of the three all-time masters of cinema by the Berlin Film Festival committee. During his trip to London, Ray learned from Jean Renior, the first European director, that the most important thing in a film is the emotional integrity of the human relationship in the film. Ray said he had seen *The Bicycle Thief* by Vittorio De Sica within three days of arriving in London, which further inspired him to make his decision to make his first feature film, *Pather Panchali*, where he used natural locations and unfamiliar actors, as was the case with *The Bicycle Thief*. Ray says, "All through my stay in London, the lessons of *The Bicycle Thief* and neo-realist cinema stayed with me." (Sen,)

Conclusion:

Satyajit Ray was one of the greatest directors of the 20th century. Who made so many cinemas that influenced our society from then until now? But the *Apu Trilogy* is a masterpiece created by Ray. He dreamed of a film industry that would adopt modernity while respecting Indian tradition and culture, which he created himself. Except for the *for the Apu Trilogy*, there are so many famous films by Satyajit Ray, such as *Gupi Gayen Bagha Bayen*, *Sonar Kella*, *Charulata*, *Jalsaghar*, etc. His *Pather Panchali* and *Apu Trilogy* still inspire filmmakers worldwide. Ray was not only an Indian director but also a great writer, publisher, and contributor to India. At the end, there is no need to say that Ray indented to make a film industry in India

that concerns Indian culture, spirit, and moving on from India to modernity at the same time, which will catch the excitement of the audience in which he succeeded in the extreme.

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