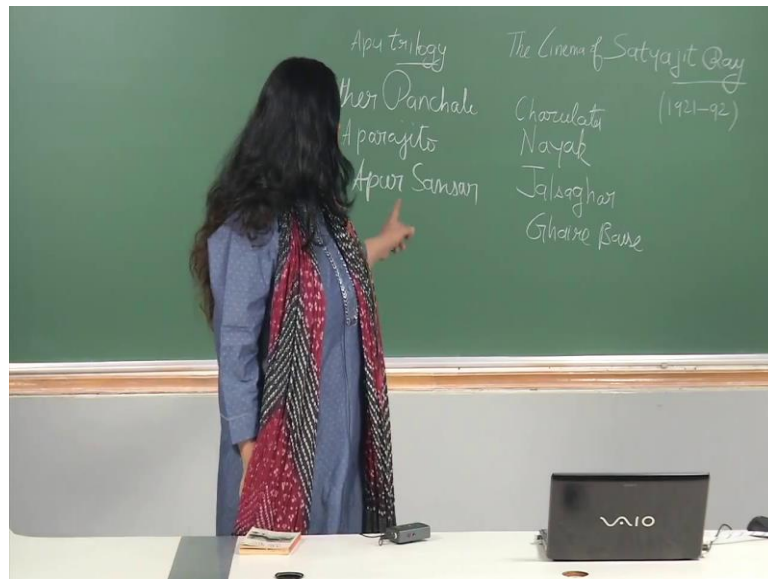


Film Appreciation
Prof. Aysha Iqbal
Department of Humanities and Social Science
Indian Institute of Technology, Madras

Lecture - 32
The Cinema of Satyajith Ray

Good morning. We have been doing plenty of Hindi cinema, Indian cinema. I also took you along with me on a journey to Hindi films. I also said at one point that we will be doing some regional cinema as well, although, not too much of it, because of time constraints. So, today's class is all devoted to the great, in fact, one of the greatest film makers not just from India, but from across the globe, Satyajith Ray. Satyajith Ray, the great director principally, from Bengal and who predominantly, made some of the greatest films in Bengali language.

(Refer Slide Time: 01:01)



He lived between 1921 and 1992. So, he is recognized; I mean, he doesn't really need introduction; one of the greatest film makers of all times. Now, his films are particularly noted for of course, he was a master crafts men, but also for his humanity, his miniaturist style and psychological nuances and in today's class, I will be talking about all these three aspects with specific reference to Ray's cinema and also, his position in world cinema. In the west, he is celebrated as a Chekhovian artist, the word Chekhovian; someone who writes in the tradition of Russian dramatist, Anton Chekhov. So, we will

also see why he is called Chekhovian artist. Ray was influenced by the international grades, such as Frank opera, John Ford also, (refer time: 02:11) and William Wyler, David Lean and (refer time: 02:17); all these names are written here.

In fact, John (refer time: 02:22) was here in India, where he was shooting for the movie, *The River* and Ray assisted him for quite some time. Ray, also discovered at the same time, the Italian neorealist, such as Luchino Visconti, Vittorio De Sica and Roberto Rosaline and therefore, the influence of these neorealist on his films. One of his all time greats is *The Apu Trilogy*, is a trilogy based on, it is like coming of age film, but it is also like a movie that depicts the socio cultural times in which, a small boy listened. It is a story, also a story of migration from the rural to the urban; this is also a frequent or a regular motive devise in all ray's films. So, *Apu Trilogy* consists of *Pather Panchale*, *Aparajito* and *Apur Sansar*; three films; three great films that made him house hold name in India, as well as abroad. The *Apu Trilogy* is principally, based on the great Bengali writer Norvalus novel; Vibhuthi Bhushan Bandhu Pandya's novel and this was his debut film also, about the magic of childhood and childhood discoveries amaze the extreme poverty of rural Bengal.

Now, much has been said about *Pather Panchale*. It is generally regarded as one of the greatest films ever made. I will read out an accept from ray; this is (refer time: 04:21) my ears with Apur and his experience of making the trilogy. The first part of trilogy that is *Pather Panchale*; this is what ray says; there was never a fully developed screen play of *Pather Panchale*, only a sheet of notes and his sketches. If it came to relating the story in the shape, it would take as a film. I knew I didn't need dossier, because I knew the whole story by heart as I have said before, the substance of the screen play, corresponded fairly, closely to decays abridgment and literary hundreds of characters had been dropped from the original book. It remains essentially, the story of the indigent Brahmin priest, Harihar Roy and his family, consisting of his wife Sarbajaya; their daughter Durga and son, Apu and an old bent cousin in the (refer time: 05:23) to the children. I shuffled across around the incidence a bit, reducing the somewhat formless rambling quality of the original and giving it a new texture. I also made aunty, live much longer in my treatment, because I knew that has certain exit that would disappointment the audience. In the original, she dies shortly after Apu is born, but in my treatment, she dies. When Durga is about 10 or 11 years old, this needed a genuine scene when Apu and Durga discover her dead body in a bamboo grow, the children's first encounter with death.

So, the film is also remarkable for the treatment. There are several memorable scenes, but then also, one of the scenes when the little girl Durga, that is Apu's sister; she dies and here is what; this is what Satya Jit Ray says about this scene. An important change I had made, was around the death of Durga. In the woods, Durga dances with joy in the monsoon rain and dies, from what is formally known as pneumonia; although, in the original, this is not shown as an after effect of getting drenched in the down port. Anita falls ill after the rainstorms seen in the woods. The lyrical dance in the rain is shown to be a distinct cause of death. My treatment ended slowly after Durga's death with the family's departure to Banaras and knew that Pather Panchale would have a very different look from the usual Bengali films.

So, this is what he felt; this was his first film, but he was absolutely, convinced that is going to be unlike anything that has ever been seen on Bengali, as well as on Indian screen. See, we have been talking about couple of you know, art house films or not so mainstream or commercial films, such as Neecha Nagar, (refer time: 07:31) and also Ja Theraho. However, Apu Trilogy was something else, altogether and it was one film that finally, made the world, recognizes that they something like this could also happen. It put India, in other words, on the map of world cinema. The second part of the trilogy is Aparajito, and it depicts the increasing tension and distance between Apu and his mother. The third part is Apur Samsar, starring Savithri Chatterjee.

Now, the boy grows up and he takes the form of a leading man, and it was also the debut film of Sharmila Tagore. At the end of the film, ray returns to his theme of childhood as now, older Apu. He walks away with his little son Kajor. The film completes Apu's moral and his spiritual journey. So, here is a scene from Pather Panchali. Ray's another monumental film is Jal Sagar. Jal Sagar or the music ray room as it is called, is an elegy to the inevitability of change. Ray creates an un paralleled mood of melancholy. The stories of widowed Zamindar, who lives in a mansion with memories of his past glory.

It is ray's reflection on a decedent class, where he shows how the protagonist ruin (refer time: 09:18). Jal Sagar is line with (refer time: 09:25) and senso and it goes beyond his preoccupation with neorealism. The film laments how the novo ratio have taken over the old aristocracy. At the same time, he also admired the patterns of our music and dance. According to the famous critic Roger Abbert, despite the faded luxuries surrounding Huzur; by Huzur, we mean the protagonist zamindar of Jal Sagar. The film is not ordinate in any way; perhaps, as a reaction to the hundreds of over wrote Indian musical

melodramas, turned out annually, remade and austere character study also, with music.

His hero deserves the comparison with king Lier. (refer time: 10:12) goes on to say that, because like Lier, he arouse our sympathy, even while indulging his vanity and stubbornly doing all of the wrong things. Like Lier, he thinks himself a man, more singed against than (refer time: 10:28) like Lier, he is wrong. So, this is a brilliant character study with physiological nuances that I talked about at the beginning of this class that ray was a master of portraying physiological complexities of his character, and he was excellent with character sketching. So, this is one reason why his films need to be analyzed and read. *Devi*, a 1960 movie again, starring Sharmila Tagore and Sharmila Tagore, was based on a film, sorry, story by Prabhath Kumar Mukherji. It was a turn of the century story written in 1899. This story of a beautiful woman Dhaya, who lives with her husband, Uma Prasad and her young son Koka and also, her extremely feudal and patriotically benevolent father in law in rural mansion.

The father in law had visions of his daughter in law in the form of an incarnation of the goddess Kali and subsequently, he starts worshipping her. Daya's husband Uma Prasad is a quintessential liberal educated voice that ray is very fond of portraying, you know, the dichotomy between the urban and the rural. So, Uma Prasad opposes his father and his belief and cox this Daya to leave the mansion, along with their film. The film ends in a terrible tragedy and however, it is remarkable for its intense power and some of the scenes are remarkable for the intensity. Among its many admirers, is the greater Hollywood film maker Martin Scorsessy, who has also discussed *Devi*, in a extremely admiring tones in several office interviews. A landmark film of ray is *Charulatha*, which is the 1964 film; it is based on Ravindranath Tagore's short story *nustanier* (refer time: 12:47). This film is a tribute to ray's meticulous skills and creating the ambiance, which in this case, is the 19th century Bengal. It is a tragedy of sensitive, lonely and neglected wife, who falls in love with her husband's cousin.

The film is remarkable for its ray's use of *mesa* song and also, the unconscious process of falling in love; it is a forbidden love and this too is portrayed with luminous intensity. Here is this famous opening scene from *Charulatha*, starring Madhavi Mukerji. *Mahanagar* can be called feminist film and it is also, ray's salute towards the empowerment of women. Aarthi again, played by Madhavi Mukerji, is the central protagonist, who is compelled to work in an office when her husband cannot make the ends meet; however, she shows great integrity when she quits her job to stand against her

boss when the boss, who tries to exploit her Anglo Indian colleague. The film is about gender equality. The hero is the husband, his pride is hurt to, and the wife becomes the main stay of the family; however, there is a sense of comprehension when she resigns her job.

For the first time in ray's films, the camera moves fast with the rhythms of the city, capturing the rhythms of the city of Calcutta. Here is a scene from Mahanagar. Nayak is a 1966 film, which stars Utham Kumar and Sharmila Tagore. The film portrays the psychological conflicts of a big time star Arindham, as played by Utham Kumar. The film uses the conceit of a journey, where the hero embarks on a train journey to Delhi to collect an award. In the train, he meets a young journalist Adhiti, played by Sharmila Tagore, who interviews him for a women's magazine. Also aboard, he meets several people, who are either overwhelmed by his presence or show open disdain for the line of work he isn't. Like Fellinie's eight and half, ray uses the troop of dreams to explore the subconscious of the actor and the make believed life, he leads. As in eight and half, ray also uses the flashback devise than the narrative moves back and forth. The film can be seen as a reflection about acting as a profession and about cinema on the whole. Here is a clipping from Nayak, the dream sequence.

Ray's 1970 master piece is (refer time: 15:58) Din Rathri, literally or if we translated, it is called Days and Nights in the forest. It is a film with physiological over tones and reflects on the relations between men and women and also, between men and the nature. The story is about four young men from Calcutta, who visit a forest to live in a rented bungalow and again, the dichotomy between city and the rural. Ray reveals the true nature of each person particularly, through their relationship with women. The group then suddenly, leaves for Calcutta, is standing at the cross road of their lives. The movie has to be seen for its men's beauty and for the psychological nuances. Ray made one Hindi film in his entire career and that is [FL]. It is also a 70s film; it is based on (refer time: 16:58) story on the same name, and this is Ray's stake on the royalty from Lucknow.

The two protagonists (refer time: 17:06) have been played by Sanjeev Kumar and Meer, as played by (refer time: 17:10) Jaafri. The carefree Nawab's of Lucknow, who spend all their time, playing chess and ignoring their domestic life and also, their political duties. This becomes a metaphor for the story as Rajdhani Shaw, the ruler of Lucknow; he faces an imminent attack by the British. So, that is a parallel track running, while the Navabs,

Meer and Mirja, they are lost in the game of chess. (refer time: 17:40) pattern of art and culture is lost in the world of esthetics; thus ignoring his political commitments and thus, making himself vulnerable to attack by the British. The film is remarkable for its visuals and authentic representation of north Indian politics and aristocratic life style.

The film had an excellent cast, headed by Sanjeev Kumar, Syed Jafri and Amjed Khan and also, Shavana Ajmir, Farooq Sheik and Richard Attenborough. Interestingly, Amithab Bachchan is the narrator of the film. So, here is the opening sequence from [FL] with Amithab Bachchan as the narrator and his (refer time: 18:27) [FL] is one of his most lauded film; it is a 1984 film, adapted from Ravindranath Tagore novel, by the same title. The novel is based on Tagore's own experiences as a Swadeshi leader. Central to the film, is the changing character of Vimala, the protagonist. Ray explores the emergence of a modern woman by moving away from the traditional expectations.

Vimala, as played by Swathi Lekha Chaterjee, is the wife of landlord Nikhil; that played by Victor Banerjee, who has had western education in England, and has liberal views. She is content to live in seclusion of an inner apartments, very grandly and almost (refer time: 19:25) decorated and she has no desire to break the custom to explore the outside world; therefore, Ghare and Baire that home and the world. In her life, arrives a young man, who is on the surface, he is a radical thinker, free thinker; her husband's friend. His coaxing and her husband's coaxing also, she begins to take lessons from an English governors, and takes the symbolic walk down the corridor to the outside world for the first time.

Now, this friend Sandeep, as played by Sumitra Chaterjee; he is a charismatic nationalist leader, staying as the guest in the palace. The film like Charulata is about a woman's journey. The film is also about the process of how she starts, depending on Sandeep, who at the end, turns out to be quite different from what she expects him to be. So, here is a clipping from Ghare Baire. Ray experimented with detective and musical genres as well. His first thriller Chidian Khana; that is the zoo; narrates the escapades of Bakshi, played by Uttham Kumar, who is the detective on trail of an ex actress.

Also, famous are his (refer time: 21:01) stories, republished 15 books about his detective hero, between 1969 and 1987. He also worked extensively, made films on television. So, he also made an adaptation of Ipsons, an enemy of the people called Ganashathru. So, ray was awarded with life time achievement; an Oscar award for the life time

achievement, and this was the pinnacle of his success. He died soon after that. So, one of the greatest film makers from our country and from across the globe is Satyajith Ray.

Thank you very much. We will continue with parallel cinema in our next classes.