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Maheshtala College

Special issue :

Satyajit Ray

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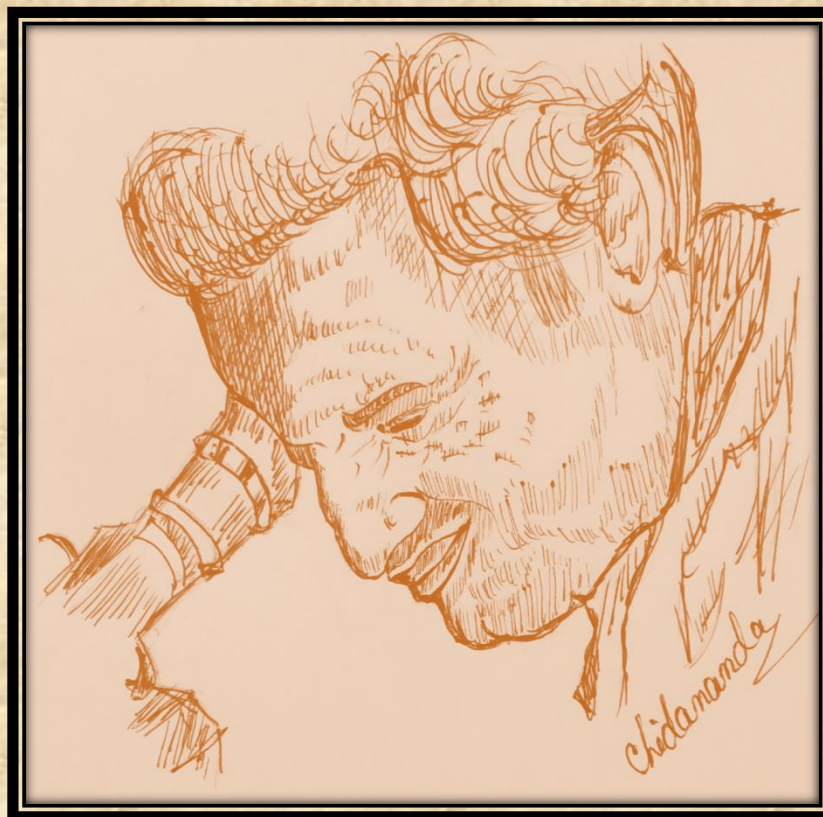
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Kaleidoscope

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MAHESHTALA COLLEGE

SPECIAL ISSUE: *Satyajit Ray*



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**WEBZINE OF DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
MAHESHTALA COLLEGE**

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PREFACE

Writing a preface or foreword to an institutional publication is possibly one of the not-so-happy tasks an educational administrator is supposed to perform! However, when this ‘task’ becomes an occasion to pay tribute to a childhood (or should I say ‘lifelong’) superhero, the preface runs the risk of becoming an over-zealous juvenile rant on the myriad virtues of the Orient Longman – our very own precious gem or Manik – SATYAJIT RAY, since he was in every sense of the term – a polymath. World-renowned film maker, screenplay writer, lyricist, music composer, author, illustrator, graphic designer and a towering singular presence who made his country proud of his myriad attributes.

As the first in the series of webzines published by the Department of English of Maheshtala College, it was a unanimous decision to dedicate this modest effort to commemorate Ray on his birth centenary. All the faculty-members and the students too were thrilled to contribute, and since all of us know that happiness multiplies on sharing, we decided to invite articles from scholars, students and teachers beyond our institution’s boundary.

This is the first issue of *Kaleidoscope* in digital version. Starting from a very modest pen & paper version in 2001, Kaleidoscope has traversed a long path and is on its 20th year now. This Special Issue focussing on Satyajit Ray has contributions by the teachers of this college as well as one from a distinguished scholar teaching in another institution, alumnus and students of the department, and by a young Ray enthusiast and a journalist in the making. The icing on the cake is definitely an interview with Sri Shib Shankar Bhattacharya, renowned painter and illustrator, long time associate of Sri Satyajit Roy and the artiste whose sketches brought life to myriad characters and smiles to myriad readers of *Sandesh*, started by Satyajit’s grandfather, Upendra Kishore Ray Chaudhuri in 1913 and that which he handled after his father, Sri Sukumar Ray’s demise. We deeply acknowledge Sri Bhattacharya’s spontaneous cooperation and kindness for sparing time out of his schedule to share some precious gems from the memory of his eventful association with the stalwart and other stars in the Ray galaxy. On behalf of the Department, I also thank Dr Suchandra Bhattacharya, HOD, Dept of Bengali in Maheshtala College in making the interview possible, thereby enriching the webzine immensely.

The publication of this Webzine would not have been possible without the unstinting efforts of the young teachers of the department, notably Prof Suchismita Neogi (who personally took care of each page of this issue), Prof Rai Sarkar (who ideated and implemented even the most nebulous thoughts!) and Prof Reeswav Chatterjee who besides devoting his time to the audio-visuals he was entrusted with, did a brilliant job as an interviewer, essayist, knickknack-man. Thanks are also due to Dr Sanghamitra Ganguly, HOD, Dept of English who motivated the students, mentored a few of them along with the teachers named earlier, and looked after all the nitty-gritties of the publication. Thank you, Dr Sukanta Das, for your wonderful article that was written almost in a record time – possible only because of your insightful approach to serious academic pursuits. The cover page of this webzine was done by Spriha Das and I thank her for her thoughtful design. Thank you, Snigdha Das, our former student and our pride, for sweetly sharing your article for us all. Thanks are also due to Aritra Mitter (as he loves to call himself) who has offered –besides his essay and interview, his help whenever sought! And last but not the least, our love and gratitude to the students of the department who contributed paintings and writings and made us all toil more to better our best and make them feel that they deserve it all - You made us bring out our best! Here’s hoping our next issues will see more of your participation.

This Webzine is dedicated to all students of the Department of English, past, present and future!

Dr Rumpa Das
Principal

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Though Dynasties Pass: A Game of Chess & the Renaissance Man

-Dr Rumpa Das, Principal,
Maheshtala College



Thomas Hardy was indebted to the Holy Bible and the Old Testament for the title of arguably his most popular and most-anthologized poem, *In Time of the Breaking of Nations*, written in the backdrop of the First World War in 1915. The poem suggests that in spite of the humungous horror manifest in wars when violence and turbulence take over and nations break or disintegrate, people will go on with their usual course in life, and in the grand scheme of life, wars make little or insignificant impact. In this paper, I shall try to trace a few possible responses to a very important historical event that Satyajit Ray, in his adaptation, or better still, cinematic retelling of Munshi Premchand's short story in his film, *Shatranj ke khilari*, tried to subtly convey for a niche audience.

Strangely, Premchand's short story is found in two versions – Urdu and Hindi, with two slightly different titles – 'Shatranj ki baazi' (Bout of Chess, trans.mine) in Urdu and 'Shatranj ke Khilari' (The Chess Players) in Hindi: Ray chose to collate the two, so that at one level, the focus is on the game or bout – in literal as well as figurative and metaphoric levels, and on another, on the players – again in the literally and figuratively.

Satyajit Ray adapted Premchand's story at a time when India was reeling through the Emergency, and it may be seen as a commentary on the same, as it was released in 1977. Beside an Indian ensemble cast comprising of Bollywood artistes Sanjeev Kumar, Saeed Jaffrey, Shabana Azmi, Farida Jalal, Amjad Khan to name a few, Ray also chose to feature Richard Attenborough, David Abraham and Tom Alter amongst the sahib – actors. In a coup of sorts, Ray roped in matinee idol Amitabh Bachhan but only as a narrator. Ray wrote the screenplay and scored the music of the film, which was his first foray into Hindi films. Another important coup was using Reba Muhuri, eminent vocalist and exponent of thumri, bhajan and khayal for playback. Ray also had kathak exponent Birju Maharaj, Calcutta Youth Choir and Amjad Khan – mostly popular as the iconic villain Gabbar Singh of *Sholay* fame, sing for him in the film. Amjad Khan played the part of an effeminate and music-loving Nawab Wajed Ali Shah; a voice that roared 'Kitne aadmi they' as the dacoit-leader lisping melodious notes of 'Tadap tadap sagri rainn guzri' ('*Oh how painfully I spent the entire desolate night*' trans.mine) was a revelation to many and sheer tragedy to a lot more. Released in Hindi, Urdu and English, the film made on a budget of Rs 20 lakhs ran for 129 minutes, a quite 'short' film by contemporary standards! Though the film made it to certain international festivals and won Ray a number of awards, it was decidedly not a film for the masses, and even on evenings when the film was being aired on national television (and quite a few times at that!), viewership dropped radically much to the chagrin of noted critics.

What is so interesting in resurrecting such a movie for a webzine in Corona-times is a question I choose to leave unanswered, and any resemblance of the plot of the film/short-story or chess-players to any situation or persons right now is accidental and completely unintended.

Premchand's slightly satirical take on the decadent feudal structure and dissolving social values of the ruling bourgeoisie of Awadh revolves on two noblemen, addicted to the game of chess but is taken to a totally new height by Ray, the master who weaves the historical narrative of the conquest of Awadh by the British into it. The time of the breaking of nations (here, a once-prosperous kingdom) is juxtaposed with many strands, of which the most significant is the interface of Western rationalism with the exotic Orient, languishing in flights of fancy, poetry, self-pity and an over-weaning pride in a fast-disappearing royalty. In Premchand's short story, Ray introduces the historical element of the annexation of Awadh and the justification of the Englishmen for the same, that rings in the issue of the white man's burden. The effeminacy of the Nawab, his epicurean indolence that insulates him from the stark political reality and the general aura of languor seem natural and are pitted against the western idea of masculine valour, exemplified by General Outram (played superbly by Richard Attenborough). The risible devaluation of the Indian king who is 'only good' in writing poetry and writes with 'the virtue of brevity' (since his trusted Captain Weston can only recite four lines of a poem by Wajed Ali Shah and Outram likes the 'sound of Hindustani') can be seen as the deliberate construction of the effeminate exotic Orient (as elaborated by Both Edward Said and Timothy Mitchell) by the macho English General, and the Indian ruling class is gradually reduced to a group of subalterns who can only elicit pity! The wretchedness and decrepit state of Awadh that draws the power-crazy Englishmen is also a reflection of the Western ideals of governance. The 'baazi' /bout referred in Premchand's Urdu version was well-adapted by Ray by the introduction of these two protagonists – the Nawab and the Englishmen.

Ray makes use of his acerbic irony best in his intermittent glances towards the two chess-players, aptly portrayed by Sanjeev Kumar and Saeed Jaffrey. Premchand's satire and Ray's piquant vision merge to give voice to the quotidian concern (rather, unconcern!) of the two chess-aficionados who play on while the process of political take-over is played out. The master-director is at his best when in the initial bouts of chess, one of the lords playing chess is averse to the notion of a new type of the game where the Queen will reign supreme; yet, towards the end, that new way of playing is accepted, over-ruling the initial hesitation. The change of authority from the Nawab of Awadh to the Queen of England in 1857 (signalled through the new game) is hinted with such mature proficiency that the game of chess becomes an allegorical framework to the protracted power-play between the Indian native-rulers and the imperialist forces. The facile satisfaction and dark humour of the chess-players' statement 'We can't handle our wives properly, how can we cope with the Company's army?' is matched by the hauntingly similar note of exasperation and self-contentment in Wajed Ali Shah's wistful murmurs - 'Chhor chaley jo Lakhnau nagari/Kaho haal aadam par kya guzri?' (*As I leave behind the city of Lucknow, /One can imagine the trauma I undergo* trans.mine). Wajed Ali's four hundred concubines, in addition to his retinue of nautch-girls, eunuchs, mutta /temporary wives and sycophants are mocked at by the English General who obviously overlooks the innate violence in the plundering of Awadh (and India, by extension) and eviction of the ruler in the name of ensuring fair polity and a skewed version of justice. Yet beyond all these layers of meanings was a subtle sub-text that possibly upheld the inexorable dynamics of life that Hardy echoed in his poem, 'Yet this will go onward the same,/Though Dynasties pass'. The game of chess continues, even after the imperialist aggression.

As illustrator, creator of four new fonts – Ray Bizarre, Ray Roman, Holiday Script and Daphnis, as creator/innovator of Bengali typefaces, in the effortless ease with which he acted as author, script-writer, music-director, lyricist, film-director, Satyajit Ray was a multi-faceted genius. In his

consummate mastery of cinema, Ray not only challenged his predecessors and contemporaries, he set such a benchmark that is yet to be touched, let alone crossed. His books on films, other writers' books on him, numerous interviews et al have not yet been able to comprehend in its entirety his spontaneous eloquence, his impeccable perception- ideation-implementation and the magic that he wove through his lens. Be it his neo-realism , his use of Western cinematic concepts in Indian milieu as in his use of the tropes used and popularised by Eisenstein and other Western greats – all of these make him the 'paroshpathor' or touchstone that completely transformed Indian cinema from its base to its golden avatar. The way Satyajit Ray revolutionised Indian cinema earned him the title – The Renaissance Man. Shyam Benegal, noted Indian director, agreeing with the adage almost, believes Indian cinema will always be known as 'before and after Satyajit Ray'. The subtle perfection which he displayed in a film such as *Shatranj ke Khilari* bears ample testimony to the fact.

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Pushing the Limits: A Study of Satyajit Ray's *Agantuk*

-Dr Sukanta Das, Associate Professor of English,
Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis Mahavidyalaya

Agantuk (The Stranger), based on his short story *Atithi*, is a 1991 Bengali film written and directed by the legendary film-maker Satyajit Ray. Ray was said to have expressed satisfaction after the last shot of the film when he announced: 'That's it. I don't have anything more to say'. *Agantuk*, Ray's swansong explores the volatile terrain of what is considered to be one of the hotly debated issues of life, namely civilization. Ray takes us on a journey towards re-examining the varied facets of life that have assumed almost axiomatic status thanks to the process of socialization and systematic educational and cultural appropriation. Ray shows us in this film that the best story is often the simple story told in unadorned yet aesthetically satisfying mode. The film is about the ordeal and trial faced by a couple –Sudhindra Bose and Anila Bose (played by Dipankar De and Mamata Shankar respectively)—who are not comfortable with the news of Anila's maternal uncle (choto mama) Monomohon Mitra's (the role played by Utpal Dutt) proposed sojourn in their place at Calcutta. This discomfort and uneasiness well up from a sense of suspicion arising out of doubtful identity of the person in question, and more importantly the unclear purpose of the visit after 35 years. Though the husband decides against welcoming the guest so as to avoid any unsavoury situation, Anila however rules out such an overture by suggesting that they should honour the age-old tradition of hospitality invoked by her uncle in his letter.

Satyajit Ray raises provocative questions in the film by juxtaposing the 'imposition' of an unwanted guest/stranger and the host who engage in subtle interrogation to get at the 'true' identity of the person concerned. While the attempt to 'know' the person has been undertaken by the couple in various ways, Ray takes this issue of knowing 'other' right onto the audience who seem to be intrigued by such a proposition. In other words the quest for identity remains to be at the heart of this fascinating film, and small wonder that the first speech spoken by Monomohon Mitra, aka Nemo (Mr No One) to Satyaki, son of Sudhindra and Anila: 'What's your name?' Understandably Ray invites us to re-examine the ways we categorize others, and in turn define us too. The plot moves through meaningful encounter between the couple and their globe-trotting guest who shares interesting anecdotes about his lived experience in different parts of the world. Monomohon Mitra mesmerizes Satyaki and his friends with interesting stories and considers the identical size of the sun and the moon as perceived from the earth as 'the greatest magic' of the universe. This small piece of information anticipates the question of what is considered to be the advancement of science and technology. In a heated argument with Sudhindra's barrister friend (played by Dhritiman Chatterjee), Monomohon questions the very foundation upon which the notions of progress, civilization, science and technology are based. While lauding the marvellous achievement of NASA, the globe-trotter argues for acknowledging the science and technology utilized in the selection of different kinds of ices in the construction of igloo by the Eskimos. No wonder Monomohon Mitra becomes the spokesperson of the film-maker who pushes us to think beyond the social straitjacket. The dichotomy between civilized people and the so-called 'jungles'/tribals is understood in terms of the huge skyscrapers and the possession of powerful weapons for mass destruction and the seemingly barbaric ways of life as lived by the tribals. Monomohon Mitra strongly dismisses such manifestations of 'civilization' and calls for re-

examination of such indoctrinated ideas. Interestingly Ray unsettles the binary of civilization and barbarism through the mouth of Monomohon Mitra whose rich reservoir of knowledge gained through active participation and wide travel undercuts the powerful notions culturally and socially transmitted to us through various apparatus like schools, religion etc. No wonder Mr Mitra dismisses religion, particularly organized religion which, he alleges, invariably divides people.

Monomohon Mitra's anthropological fieldwork undertaken in various primitive societies across the globe has not only endowed him with the profound truths of life, but also helped him interrogate the socially and culturally transmitted notions. With the help of precise details and sophisticated use of camera, Ray focuses on the ways we can transcend the cocoons of our identity by questioning the way we are defined and we define others through our subscription to prevalent social and cultural ethos. Ray advocates cosmopolitanism, an ethos that moves beyond the known space to embrace others. Such a worldview does not advocate complete cessation of one's native affiliation but prepares one how to negotiate with what happens to be 'other'. In a telling response to Anila, the uncle confidently assures that staying in foreign place does not necessarily make one forget his/her 'mother tongue', unless one intends doing so. Interestingly this desire to know others, to cultivate cosmopolitanism is understood in terms of its non-hegemonic nature. No wonder Monomohon Mitra champions liberal, non-prejudiced discourse the basis of which is openness, openness to embrace new ideas. His foray into anthropological research is premised upon his deep distrust of socially transmitted notions of civilization, progress, science etc.

Satyajit Ray takes us on a journey towards exploring what exists beyond our periphery. While Monomohn Mitra charms his audience with his astounding knowledge of the world and his oratorical skill tempered with humour, Ray's audience participates vicariously in the couple's struggle to know who we are. This philosophical quest assumes a definitive form when Anila is asked by her husband to join with the dancing Santhal women in Shantiniketan. This is dexterously captured in the film when Monomohan Mitra speaks in a jocular, but unmistakable tone; 'I don't have any doubt now that she is my niece'. The first step towards embarking on a voyage for identity is to recognize the limits of one's understanding attained through subscription to various social and cultural institutions. It is not for nothing that Monomohon Mitra categorically writes off passport as a reliable marker of identity. He implies that the ordeal faced by them is necessary to 'know' and 'understand' others. Sudhindra and Anila experience embarrassment and feel guilty for their doubt regarding the identity of their uncle. The curtain is drawn with the globe-trotter embarking on another journey to discover the unknown, and the couple has undergone possible transformations to grapple with the unknown, the stranger. The key to such transformation is, as Monomohon Mitra confides in Satyaki, not to become a 'kupomanduk'—a frog enmeshed in a well.



Sonar Kella and Jay Baba Felunath: A Journey Though Exotic India

-Dr. Sanghamitra Ganguly, Assistant Professor,
Department of English, Maheshtala College

Satyajit Ray, continuing his family tradition, has been among the most prolific children's story writers in Bengali. *Sonar Kella* (1971) and *Jay Baba Felunath* (1975) are among the two most well-loved stories that Satyajit Ray wrote featuring the super sleuth Feluda. He later adopted both these stories for the cinematic medium. This textual journey from the print to the screen has been flawless, and both these movies are accepted as classics by the critics. There are many reasons for the universal appreciation of these two movies, which have enthralled not only children but also adults over the last few generations. One reason for this might be the way the two movies have used the picturesque backgrounds of Rajasthan and of Kashi almost as protagonists of the stories. The minute details of these places, their sights, sounds and smell, come alive on the screen as we experience the adventures of Feluda, Topshe and Jatayu in these exotic locales. This was a part of Ray's realistic technique of film making, as he preferred to shoot on location rather than within the confines of a studio. As he himself said, "When I'm shooting on location, you get ideas on the spot—new angles. You make any major changes but important modifications, that you can't do on a set." Hence is his preference for shooting on locations. In both these movies we can see how masterfully Ray weaves together a travelogue and a detective story around the setting of the stories.

The movie *Sonar Kella* (1974) introduced a large number of Bengalis to Rajasthan, and the Jaisalmer Fort forever came to be known as Sonar Kella (Golden Fort). It is estimated that more than sixty percent of the tourists who visit Jaisalmer are Bengalis. Scenes like Feluda and his companions chasing a train through the desert mounted on camels or little Mukul looking for his home of his past life inside the fort remain etched in the mind of the viewer. Similar local flavor permeate the screen often. At the Pokhran railway station against the background of the setting sun, silhouettes of Rajasthani men wearing their ethnic dress and shawl can be seen. Against this background, Lalmohan babu is having his tea with camel milk. The haunting tune of the folk song sung by a local artiste outside the Pokhran railway station "Man mera Ram Ram rache" adds to the quality of the atmosphere. As Sidhartha Chattopadhyay (Topshe) says, "...the canvas was itself so beautiful with the yellow sand, the blue sky, the gorgeous Rajasthan desert more than a film it was a piece of painting." Mukul's journey in search of his past home takes him and all the others first from Kolkata to Delhi to Jodhpur, with a quick stop at Jaipur at the famous Nahargarh Fort. In between there is a day trip to Bikaner in search of Mukul's Sonar Kella. But the majority of the film is shot in Jodhpur, with the Jodhpur Circuit House being featured prominently in many of the scenes in which the game of one-upmanship is played between Feluda and the crooks. Finally the group's journey concludes at Jaisalmer where Mukul ends up finding his lost home. Based on this itinerary, various travel agencies even offer "The Sonar Kella Circuit" which involves the tour of Jaipur, Bikaner, Jaisalmer and Jodhpur, such is the enduring popularity of the movie.

In *Jay Baba Felunath* (1979), Ray has documented Benaras like few others have, capturing on lens the city for the second time after *Aparajito*. The setting is the old Kashi of labyrinthine lanes and by-lanes, ancient dilapidated buildings more than hundred years old, old Bengali settlements or Bangalitola, and the ghats alongside the Ganga, most notably the Darbhanga Ghat, making the Bengalis nostalgic for their past cultural and civilisational heritage. Through the insertion of the

familiar spots of the city Ray was recreating the topography of this deeply familiar place for his target audience, the Bengali speaking viewers. Hence we find Machhli Baba addressing his devotees and Maganlal Meghraj at Rana Mahal Ghat; and Feluda vows to avenge Lalmohan Babu's humiliation at the hands of Maganlal at the Kedar Ghat. Again, Feluda is seen confronting Bikash at Ram Bhandar and then taking him to Man Mandir Observatory. The Kashi Biswanath Temple and the by-lanes surrounding it are also captured with great care. This abbreviated tour through the entire city provides a delightful nostalgic evocation for the audience. This is also the perfect background of a mystery thriller. The movie starts with Feluda, Topshe and Jatayu entering the city of Benaras on rickshaws, immediately introducing the viewer with the archetypal sights and sounds of the place. The movie is full of semi-lit impressionistic imagery of Benaras. In a climactic scene of the movie, Feluda follows a man who had been bathing in the Ganga ghats to his home in an old and abandoned palace by the ghats, taking us along in his exploration of this crumbling piece of history. In another scene Feluda and his companions are walking through a dark serpentine lane after dinner and "exploring" the city (in Lalmohan babu's words), chewing the famous Banarasi *paan*, when an old man, the idol-maker, staggers out only to die in Feluda's arms. These frames of the city seem like a work of art coming alive on screen straight out of the canvas.

Thus in both the movies, the location or setting serves the important function of preparing the context against which the human drama is played. The exotic background is also a factor of the continuing appeal of both the movies, documenting a part of history of India of the 1970s, preserving on screen the Rajasthan and the Benaras that are now lost for ever.



Meetings with the Maharajas: Interview with Sri Shibshankar Bhattacharya

It has always been a dream for us to be a part of the magical adventures of Goopy Gyne and Bagha Byne. Despite our earnest desire, the difference between the reel and the real appears to be the main obstacle in fulfilment of such a dream. However, that does not seem to be a problem for Shibshankar Bhattacharya who experienced a world, which is still, a fairy tale for us. “We were watching a Charlie Chaplin film on the occasion of Manikda’s (Satyajit Ray) anniversary. I was sitting on the big sofa with a plate full of food, between Goopy Gyne (Tapen Chatterjee) and Bagha Byne (Robi Ghosh). Kamuda (Kamu Mukherjee) and Soumitrada (Soumitra Chatterjee) were also present there. Suddenly, I noticed my plate was empty and the magical pair was busy munching my food,” Sri Bhattacharya recalled one of his childhood memories which is nothing less than a fairy tale for us. Though it is slightly surprising that the pair, gifted with magical powers, who can make any food appear out of nowhere just by clapping hands with each other, had to resort to sleight of hands to fill their stomachs.

Along with being associated with *Sandesh* since his early childhood, Sri Bhattacharya has been involved in group theatre as well. He was a close acquaintance of the late Maestro Debabrata Biswas. Sri Bhattacharya’s first exhibition was organised in Japan when he was only a 16 year old adolescent. He has consistently worked for the various magazines of SAIL and TATA. One of his paintings embellishes a wall of the parliament. He has written rigorously throughout his life, publishing around 150 stories in *Sandesh* and in other esteemed magazines of Bengal.

Sri Bhattacharya was involved for a long time with the publication process of *Sandesh*. The children’s magazine was initiated by Ray’s grandfather Upendrakishore Roychowdhury in 1913 and was revived by Satyajit Ray and Subhas Mukhopadhyay, the renowned poet, in 1961 after the publication stopped for the second time in 1934. Sri Bhattacharya reminisced how he started to contribute in the editing process of *Sandesh* when he was a junior school student - “When he (Ray) used to edit, he often called me to his house to know my opinions on some of the pieces about which he was doubtful. Since *Sandesh* was a children’s magazine, to him, the honest opinion of a child mattered the most. I have not seen many editors as skilled as Ray. At times, he himself used to rework on some of the pieces which were not up to the mark and after editing they turned out to be marvellous. He never compromised with quality. Fame did not mean anything to him. So, many a time, renowned authors were asked for alternative pieces when Ray did not find them convincing.” At that time, many literary stalwarts were involved with *Sandesh* and Lila Majumdar was one of them. Sri Bhattacharya remembers that the editing process of *Sandesh* was so transparent that “if Liladi didn’t like anything about Manikda’s writings, she openly used to say that to him and vice versa.”

Gathering reviews about his works from all quarters was one of the distinguishing qualities of Ray. Sri Bhattacharya now feels a bit embarrassed to remember that once during his school days, he suggested to Ray that the name *Pather Panchali* was not suitable for the film as it revolved around a village and not a road. He fondly recalls, “Manikda was elated to hear my observation and said that one of his friends, Radha Prasad Gupta, also made a similar remark and felt that *Aam Atir Bhenpu* would have been a more apt title for the film.”

Sri Bhattacharya proudly remembers how he was one of the few ‘informants’ of Ray, whose duty was to note the audience reactions about his films from different places. In this regard, he narrated an incident – “I remember that Manikda was uncertain as how people will react to the film *Sadgati*. I had to go to a remote village where in a small room, the film was exhibited with almost 200 people. There was a huge crowd outside the room as well. When I returned to his place that night at around 8 o’clock, he wanted to know about the minute details of the screening. He was a bit anxious when I told him that certain Brahmins were not pleased with the film.” These insightful digressions indeed made Bhattacharya’s accounts more exciting and livelier.

Sandesh was also instrumental in making illustrator Satyajit Ray more popular. In this regard, Sri Bhattacharya remarked, “Satyajit Ray was first to introduce image-drawing in the world of Bengali magazine, that is, what the story or poem is trying to say had to be portrayed through images. With every piece, the style used to change and he identified people who were fit for doing the illustrations and assigned them with the task. Manikda himself used to draw most of the illustrations. He was an extremely powerful artist. Calligraphy was one of the basic elements of his illustrations. Our Sanskrit manuscripts have taken from Arabic, Parsee and other fonts including Bengali pot culture. He used to use all these styles in his illustrations. His typography was another attraction of *Sandesh* and it was designed depending on the themes of the literary pieces. He was brilliant in designing them. Even today, I wonder with awe, how he could attain these feats with such an ease!”

Sri Bhattacharya learnt a lot about illustrations while working with Ray for *Sandesh*. He informed, “Manikda used to highlight the theme of the literary pieces, be it a story or a poem, in his illustrations. We opted the style which would be the best for this purpose. He never used to guide us for this as he believed that guidance would not be of much help. Often he shared certain references with me and we exchanged opinions but the style was absolutely original.” What appeared to be very striking to Sri Bhattacharya was that like Abanindranth Tagore, Ray also was aware and well-informed about all the styles of painting – from Western styles to Bengali pot culture. However, he appropriated whatever was necessary from all these styles and created an indigenous style for his illustrations that would be most appealing to the readers.

Though it started as a children’s magazine, *Sandesh* was very popular among adults as well. “The main reason behind this was that we never differentiated between children’s literature and adult literature,” revealed Sri Bhattacharya. He further said, “The pieces published in *Sandesh* appealed to children and adults alike as we only knew two types of writings – good and bad!” Sri Bhattacharya himself also does not believe in terms such as children’s author or adult author – he is certain that literature is something that should have a universal acceptance.

The unique feature of *Sandesh* was that even the fairy tales were deeply rooted in reality and the stories intentionally refrained from imparting any moral teachings to the children. Sri Bhattacharya thinks that this factor made the magazine so popular among the children as it provided them with the opportunity to nurture their own sense of understanding, rationality and reasoning. He stated, “*Sandesh* had no separate team as such but whoever read even a single issue thought himself to be a part of it and could come forward to get involved with the publication process. This was the speciality of the magazine.” Sri Bhattacharya happens to be a bit sceptical about today’s publications which is evident from his words – “*Sandesh* provided an open and free ambience which is very different from today’s publication processes which are business-oriented and focused too much on thriller and detective genres because of their popularity. But think of a story like Manikda’s *Bonkubabur Bondhu!*”

Sri Bhattacharya believes that the down to earth nature of these stalwart writers, their observations understanding of the child’s psyche were instrumental behind their literary masterpieces. He recalled how effortlessly Lila Majumdar befriended his five-year-old daughter who had a knack for writing since childhood. When the latter said she will never tell lies, the legendary author humourously asked her, “How will you write stories then?”

There is a common notion that at present with the demise of several stalwart Bengali authors over the years have been a setback for Bengali literature. However, Sri Bhattacharya opines, “It is not that good pieces are not being written nowadays but sadly there is an absence of a skilled editor who can select and choose a good piece. As a result of this, the standard of old magazines is deteriorating day by day. Though thrillers and detective stories are very popular and temporarily help in increasing the sales, these stories are not staying with the readers. They still fondly remember Manikda’s *Sadanander Khude Jagat* or Liladi’s *Ganshar Chithi*.”

Even *Sandesh*’s standard has also declined over the years. “With the demise of Satyajit Ray, Lila Majumdar and others who were the main contributors of the magazine, its popularity took a hit,” said an aggrieved Bhattacharya. He further continued, “There are talented writers at present for *Sandesh* but the editing part needs much more attention. Satyajit Ray devoted a lot of care for the editing of *Sandesh*. He believed that the contents of the magazine could be instrumental in shaping the minds of the young readers.” In fact, Bhattacharya and Sandip Ray were involved with the editing process of *Sandesh* but then “Sandip also got busy with other engagements and I also slowly moved away from the process. I feel that more youngsters should come and take responsibility and that could turn around the fortune of *Sandesh*.” Nevertheless, Sri Bhattacharya is happy to believe that he is still some way or the other associated with the entire process because what he shares with *Sandesh*, is the “bond of a lifetime.”

Today, these memories are the most precious treasure of the 67 year old Sri Bhattacharya. His associations with these legendary figures have provided him with an enriching experience that has shaped his life and left him with several exciting anecdotes turning him into a living encyclopaedia about the life and works of the versatile genius.

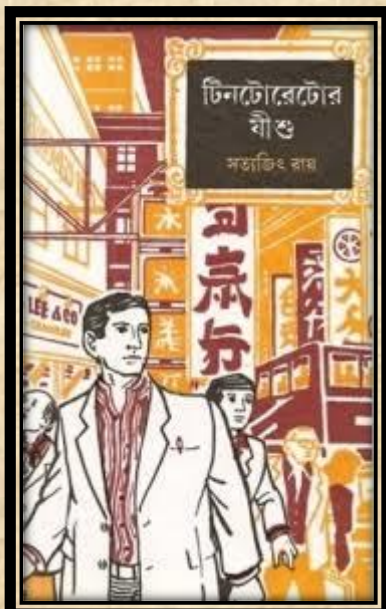
(Interviewed by Reeswav Chatterjee and Aritra Mitra)



Ray: The Illustrator Behind the Director

- Suchismita Neogi, SACT,
Department of English, Maheshtala College.

Satyajit Ray was an irrefutable genius when it comes to his writings but his illustrations were no less either. Interestingly, the heir to the great Upendrakishore and Sukumar Ray is known to have started as a graphic illustrator before he was recognised as one of the greatest directors in the

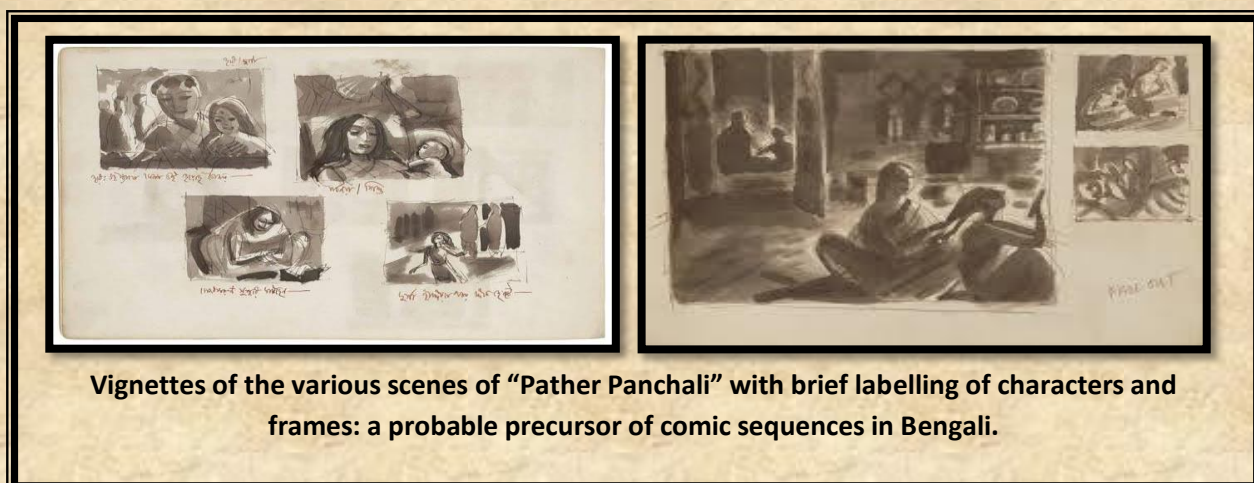


Benod Behari Mukherjee's Oriental influences as seen in Ray's cover design for Tintoretto'r Jishu.

world of cinema. Ray, in his earlier days, had been interested in fine arts and learned and practiced under notable icons such as Nandalal Bose and Benod Behari Mukherjee at Shantiniketan. His cover design for *Tintoretto'r Jishu* bears evidence of the profound influence of Mukherjee's oriental artwork. The British advertising agency under which Ray began working as a 'junior visualiser' in 1943, recognised and appreciated his works for their artistic styles, traditional attributes and most importantly aesthetic authenticity. His advertisements included both combination of words and image sequences portrayed by the means of "highlighted isolation" in order to make impactful representations and provide scope for maximum memory retention amongst the audience.

We are all aware that illustrations have always played a major role in the readers' visualisation of a plot. Ray's expertise as a narrative illustrator and immense success in filmmaking is no coincidence. He was acclaimed as an "image-driven storyteller" and his phenomenal scene compositions speak of his brilliance. He came up with the idea of his first film "Pather Panchali" while he was illustrating for *Aam Aanthi'r Bhepu*, an abridged version of Bibhutibhusan Bandhopadhyay's novel. It was said that Ray spent an elephantine amount of time painting his scenes which were further materialised and implemented to the smallest detail.

"He [Satyajit Ray] did some sketches in a drawing book after he had come back from London in 1950 and illustrated a succession of pictures (in pen, brush and ink) for the sequences of frames as they would come up in the film."- said Sandip Ray in the preface to *Pather Panchali Sketchbook* published by Harper Collins India in 2016.

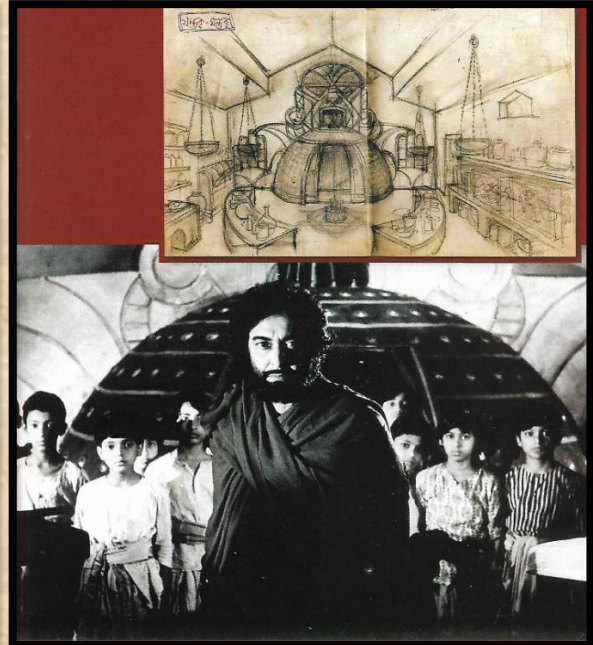


Vignettes of the various scenes of "Pather Panchali" with brief labelling of characters and frames: a probable precursor of comic sequences in Bengali.

Ray's famous 'kherorkhata' (Red Notebook) contained several drafts for costume design, set frames and even character outlooks. The sets of "Hirak Raja'r Deshe" (1980) were primarily sketched in the 'kherorkhata' in detail with equal emphasis on the decorative appearances of the courtiers. Even the appearances of the ghosts in "Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne" (1969) made it to the sets from the very same notebook. The most casual glimpse through the sketches also confirms the ornate resemblances in the films.



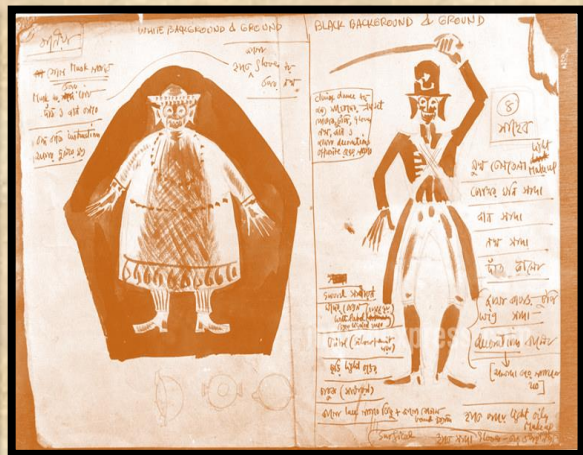
The "hirak raja'r doorbin" as sketched by Ray. The entire design is scaled proportionately in the film as are the other details of the room including the big key-ring.



A pencil sketch of the "jontor montor ghor"- every gear and mechanism of the semi-circular room for hypnosis illustrated in detail.



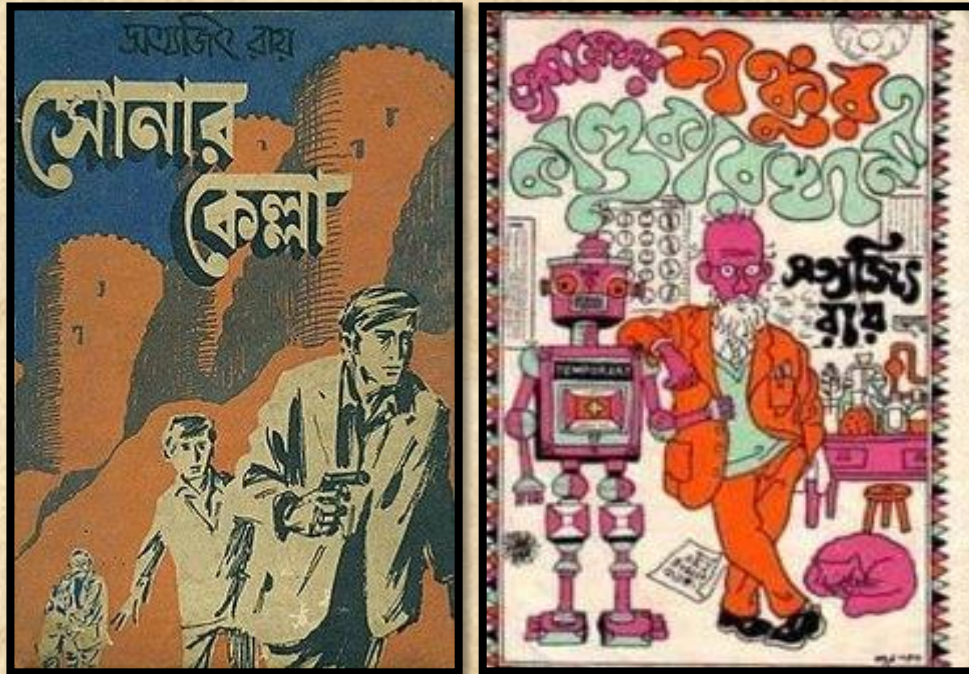
Costume designs as sketched for "Hirak Raja'r Deshe".



The detailed description of the ghosts for the movie "Goopy Gyne Bhagha Byne".

During the pre-digital era of illustrations, artists had to maintain quite a realist mode of creative visualization since back then the illustrations acted as a substitute for photographs. But by the time Ray started cultivating the genre, photography and digital designing had already become popular

and thus, provided the genius immense scope for experimentation. Ray deployed techniques of narrative realism while sketching scenes from Feluda and Shonku series. While designing the covers for these books the characters were drawn poignantly with minimal yet notable amount of background noise in order to predict the thrill and dynamism that would be unravelled within.



The predictive book covers of Feluda and Shonku series.

Ray, till date, is unquestionably considered as one of the finest graphic designers of our country with his sheer excellence in aesthetic originality and purposeful functionality. Probably the key to his success was his acceptance and acknowledgement of a mixed and widespread audience. Such outlook towards artistry has always been rare and maybe a supposed reason for the incessant celebrations of his works even in the contemporary times.



The Trial

- Rai Sarkar, SACT, Department of English,
Maheshtala College.

*T*wirling and twirling
Newton came to a still,
Sniffed at the bottles
Kept on the sill.
He had squeezed himself into the lab
When none was around;
As Professor would scold him
If he made a sound.
He glanced at each bottle
With a peculiar eye,
There must be something 'FISHY'
He felt, as he passed by.
At Prof, he looked with
A curious view,
When his master gave him
A strange jujube.
He snuffed the bolus
Kept in a dish,
And gobbled it within
Minutes of six.
No sooner did he eat it up
He felt,
Full in his stomach.

As if he had eaten
A week's ration,
He then climbed up on Prof's lap
Whose face was then ashen.
Newton then licked Prof's palm,
Just to make him serene and calm.
He was so pleased
With his master,
That he brushed his chins
With his whiskers.
'Did you like it'?'
asked the Prof,
'Purr, Purr',
Cried the puss.
Mr. Shonku now felt
Very glad,
As he had now successfully
Tested his tab.
His FISH PILL
Was now liked by NEWTON,
Who now slept peacefully
On the futon.



Who is Afraid of the Non-/Human?

-Reeswav Chatterjee, SACT,
Department of English, Maheshtala College

While speaking about Satyajit Ray, the spotlight most of the times fall on his achievements on the celluloid. Interestingly, author Satyajit Ray was one of the people who were instrumental in the generic development of the post-Tagore Bengali short story. He along with Premendra Mitra brought international themes and concerns of the science fiction genre to the Bengali reader, contemporising him/her with the latest development in the field of posthumanism. From the Wellsian speculation of Alien Invasion (“Professor Shonku o Golok Rohosyo”), to the paranoia of alien/non-human infestation of the cold war times (Ray’s translation of “Mars is Heaven” and his own “Shonkur Sonir Dosha”), to the post 1950s obsession with A.I. and robotics (“Professor Shonku o Robu”)--- you name almost any significant theme of contemporary international science fiction and Ray would have it. One of the chief points of emphasis that the Macy Conferences (1946-1953) had put up was the possibility of a mutual relationship between the human and the non-human, through the development of reflexivity. They discussed, debated and analysed how certain technological systems can be initiated by human agents but then the system attempts to connect to the human agents through feedback loops and thereby take the human agents into the system itself. Ray has time and again gone back to explore and speculate over this possibility of human and non-human mutuality, as “Bonkubabur Bondhu” comes immediately to our mind. In this short article we will talk about the premises, aspects and politics of the human-non-human mutuality, as perceived by Ray.

Foucault in his closing paragraph of *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* talks about the historical appearance of this thing called ‘man:-

“it was the effect of a change in the fundamental arrangements of knowledge. As the archaeology of our thought easily shows, man is an invention of recent date. If those arrangements were to disappear as they appeared, if some events ...were to cause them to crumble, as the ground of classical thought did, at the end of eighteenth century, then one can certainly wager that man would be erased, like a face drawn in the sand at the edge of the sea.”

As we can understand from this that human is not a natural given thing as such, but rather a historical construction, with significant political and philosophical underpinnings. Enlightenment humanism constructed the idea of the human as the opposite of the non-human. It is on the basis of the otherisation of the ontologically different being, that the ‘human’ of enlightenment humanism was constructed. One needs to understand that all human acts of oppressing, marginalising or torturing the non-human (which can be anything from deforestation to poaching to torturing domestic animals to even humanly generating climate change) stem from the otherisation of the non-human by humanism. This otherisation of the non-human constructed the premises of antagonising the alien in the 20th century. In novels after novels, stories after stories the non-human was portrayed as a threat, as something which is obsessed with the destruction of humanity, physically and culturally. Think about *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. If there is anyone evil and villainous it is Stapleton who not only has the evil intentions, but the murderous mentality as well. The dog is only a pathetic animal who is left alone in extreme harsh conditions, in a cave in the Devon moors. A chained, starving isolated animal has been turned into

the “Satan from the hell” while all the evil tendencies are in the human. Baskervilles is only one among numerous examples of how humanism has otherised animals and other non-animals by making it a symbol of human evilness for no reason. The very existence of the word “Bestial” which automatically carries a negative connotation with it, can be cited as a prime example.

This politics of humanism aims at shifting the evilness from the human to its non-human other and uses that as a logic of its otherisation. This humanist notion is precisely what Ray has challenged time and again. We will try to analyse it with the help of his stories:-“Anukul’. In “Anukul”, Ray picks up some very significant aspect of the human, non-human equation. Ray explores how human anxiety of being intellectually outplayed by a more perfect ontological species can disrupt the possibility of achieving mutuality between the human and the non-human. It’s of colossal importance that we note how this insecurity in the human is the root of the otherisation of the non-human. The narrator’s relative is uncomfortable with Anukul because Anukul bursts his vacuous humanist vanity of being the most intellectual species on the planet. Anukul’s perfection and the relative’s lack of perfection are juxtaposed precisely to dismantle the Enlightenment anthropocentrism which places the human at the centre, and certifies its right to dominate its others. Anukul’s perfection functions as a critique of the humanist construction of the ‘human’ as the superior species and challenges the binarisation between the human and the non-human. And finally, the ‘shocking’ death of the relative in the hands of Anukul is actually placed strategically as a symbol---symbol of the collapse of the humanist human, of that human which otherises the non-human. On the contrary, the relation between the narrator and Anukul shows how if the human steps down from its position of the superior oppressor, then mutuality between the human and the non-human can be achieved.

This aspect of achieving mutuality has been explored from multiple perspectives in Ray’s science fiction. The idea of ‘creating a non-human self-creation’ is depicted in “Aschorjo Prani”, the moment of mutual familiarisation is shown in “Mahakasher Dut”, while Korvas and Robu emerge as the “good” which punishes the Human “evil”.



In Search of an Indigenous Identity

- Aritra Mitter, Script Writer of SPCKraft

In India, at least for the Bengalis, cinema and Satyajit comes synonymously. However, often this appreciation is at a superficial level as people expresses impressive adjectives to discuss about his films in public sphere to avoid humiliation but goes home wondering – what is so special about his films?

The distinctiveness of Ray's films is present throughout his filmography which people tend to overlook and often ponder upon such thoughts. Hence, in order to understand the speciality of his films, one has to go back to Ray's essay 'What is wrong with Indian cinema?' where he clearly points out the drawbacks of Indian cinema. "Often by a queer process of reasoning, movement was equated with action and action with melodrama," he wrote. The brainless imitation of American cinema was also held responsible as a loophole in Indian cinema by Ray. He pointed out, "The superficial aspects of the American style, no matter how outlandish the content, were imitated with reverence. Almost every passing phase of the American cinema has had its repercussions on Indian film." It is true that stories had been written preserving the Hollywood successes and clichés with care. Even in case of films, where the stories had been purely indigenous, the jazz music played a vital role in their background scores.

There is no doubt that Hollywood films and Western music had a huge influence on Ray but instead of imitating them Ray wanted to establish an identity for indigenous cinema and his first film *Pather Panchali* (1955) is such an instance. A novel by a Bengali novelist about a small Bengali village achieved wonders in world cinema. Filmmakers like Ray believed that the stories they choose to tell must be native to their own culture and the place where they come from but should connect the world through the characters of the films because the basic human emotions are same all over the world. This feature is very much prevalent in the works of the stalwarts of world cinema. For instance, the influence of the Japanese Noh theatre and the samurai settings are an integral part of Kurosowa's films, the image of post Second World War Italy is poignant in the works of De Sica, the rugged Iran terrain is brought to life by Kiorastami through his characters which every individual across the globe can relate to.

Ray attempted to create a separate and unique identity for Indian and Bengali cinema through his films. He used his stories, characters, settings. Music, costumes and everything to establish this identity. This can be elucidated through his *Goopy Bagha* trilogy where the protagonists were the representatives of Bengali folk culture as Kakoli Mondal in her article, *Satyajiter Goopy Bagha – Banglar Lokjiboner Dui Protinidhi (Satyajit's Goopy and Bagha – Representatives of Bengal's folk culture)* pointed out. In the first film of the trilogy, *Goopy Gyne o Bagha Byne* (1969), the musical instruments played during the dance sequence of the ghosts are all Indian folk instruments and the dance forms of Bharatanatyam and folk dance were used during the sequence. Through the characters of Goopy and Bagha, Ray depicts the common people of Bengal. For instance, the villages from where Goopy and Bagha come from, Amloki and Hortuki, respectively are just like any other villages of Bengal. Even in their attire, dialect and attitude, Goopy and Bagha represent the common folk. Even the boons they wanted from the King of Ghosts reflect the needs and necessities of the common folk. The elite class people will definitely desire for more luxuries in

their demands. This desire is reflected in the desire of Brahmananda Acharya, a character from *Goopy Bagha Phire Elo* (1991), the last film of the trilogy, who desired to become immortal.

There is an essence of folk music spread throughout the canvas of the film. Ray emphasised on folk music in his film to show the importance of the indigenous music. The rich variety of indigenous music that is almost lost under the Western influences as an impact of colonisation. Ray creates a musical collage in the court of the King of Shundi where one is singing *tarana* and *dhrupod* is imposed on it, again someone takes up kirtan from there and an unbelievable satire is being created where a male singer is singing in a female voice. In the song, *Maharaja...Tomare Selam*, the true essence of Bengali folk music is being echoed. There is an innovation, spontaneity and originality in the song that can attract the spectators. Though the King of Shundi is an admirer of classical music, he is impressed by this folk tune. Thus, it becomes clear from the king's reaction that no matter how much you appreciate the classical music, it is not possible to do away with one's 'folk identity' – the commonality among all people irrespective of classes.

Now one may wonder that despite being an admirer of classical and Western music, in his film Ray made folk music accompanied by the folk instruments, the winner. In different sequences of the film, the director used different folk instruments which include *dhol*, *dhak*, *ektara*, *dotara*, *ghatam*, *bansi*, *dhamasa*, *khanjira*, *mursing* and others. Several elements of folk music are scattered throughout the film. Through the exhibition of folk literature, folk music, folk instruments, folk dance, folk food, folk clothing, folk art and folk tradition in this film, the 'folk identity' of Goopy and Bagha are being established again and again.

The creative persona of Ray was constantly engaged in creating this indigenous identity through his films and this is the reason he is so much revered in the film fraternity and his works are appreciated across the globe. His works depict a slice of the common people's lives uniting the population of the world through the only universal language of cinema – human emotions.



My Homage to Ray

- **Snigdha Das**, Ex-Student, Department of English,
Maheshtala College

Satyajit Ray's life was like that of an ordinary man at the beginning, though he came of one of the most illustrious families of Bengal. We know that he had to face failure at finding funds for "Pather Panchali". Leaving his permanent job at 'Signet Press', he began to walk in the uncertain world of movies. But he was not just a film-maker. He was a successful designer (a graphic artist). Not only that, he is the most successful author of children's books in Bengali. Among the iconic characters he created are Feluda, Topshe, Jatayu, Tarini Khuro, Professor Shonku and many others.

One interesting feature of Ray's creations is the frequent use of the doppelganger effect in many of his stories and movies. Two characters are there who are exactly similar in appearance but are in actuality a mirror image of each other. This has been a frequent feature of the Gothic novel. In Ray's story which often incorporates the Gothic elements, the concept of two characters with the same face recur again and again – "Kailas Chaudhuri r Pathor" (twins), "Shonku r Shonir Dosh" (the robot design as Shonku), "Robu" (scientist as robot), "Bhokto" (Amallesh Mallik and Arup Babu). One of his most famous books is "Chhinmostaar Abhisaap", when he portrayed the character from the absurd reality, whose name is Suresh Biswas. In the story of "Chhinmostaar Abhisaap" as we delve deeper, we come to know that Karandiker – man made in the style of Suresh Biswas and Durie are the one man in two characters. In "Bombaiyer Bombetey" the villain Mr. Sanyal creates the illusion of having a doppelganger to create an alternate reality for Feluda. Similarly in "Jato Kando Kathmandu te" Anantalal Batra and his duplicate are of identical appearance, though once again it is a construct of the devious human mind. So we can see that in his detective stories featuring Feluda, the doppelganger concept is often misconstrued by the villains. In his movie adaptation of his grandfather's story "Gupee Gayen Bagha Bayen" there are the identical twins Hallar raja and Shundir raja (both played by Santosh Dutta), one of them peace-loving and the other a war-monger, signifying that the capacity for good and evil coexist in the human soul.



Satyajit Ray's First "Feluda Adventure- Badshahi Angti"

-Sayan Majumdar, 3rd year, English Honours

Satyajit Ray was an Indian film director, Screenwriter, Author, Music composer, Lyricist, Graphic designer and Illustrator. He is widely considered as one of the greatest filmmakers of 20th century. Ray was one of the leading figures of Parallel cinema; Ray is celebrated for such works as *The Apu Trilogy* (1955-59), *The Music Room* (1958), *The Big City* (1963) and *Charulata* (1964). He was born in Calcutta into a Bengali family who were prominent in the fields of art and literature. He created many memorable characters in his writings, among them *Feluda*, *Professor Sonku*, *Tarini Khuro* are most famous.

Feluda is the protagonist of a series of detective stories written by Satyajit Roy. *Badshahi Angti* is the first novel of Feluda series. This novel was first serialized in *Sandesh* magazine in the year 1966-1967. It was then released in book form in 1969 by Ananda Publishers.

This is the first cases of Feluda as a detective that we get to read. Feluda here works for a bank. Topshe is still a little boy and Jatayu is yet to appear. In this novel Feluda along with Topshe and Topshe's father decide to visit Dharendra Kumar Sanyal (or Dhiru kaka, as called by Topshe), who lives in Lucknow during the Durga puja holidays. There they come across an acquaintance of Dhiru kaka, Dr. Srivastava, who claims to have a precious ring once owned by Emperor Aurangzeb. He wants to keep this ring in Dhiru kaka's house as some thugs are threatening to steal it. However this ring soon goes missing. The rest of the story deals with how Feluda keeps this ring safe. It is revealed that he himself stole the ring and hid it in the Bhool Bhulaiya. Thus, Feluda solves his first case, revealing in the process a series of previously committed crimes.

Feluda is a new kind of detective in Bengali fiction who uses both brain cells and muscle power to solve the crime. In this novel, Feluda kept the ring with him from the very first moment because he thought no one would doubt him because he was the guest of Dhiru kaka. This is a plot twist that is revealed much later in the story. He silently started to solve the case and was determined to find the criminal. Feluda is savvy enough to realize that it is risky to always carry the ring with him, so he hides the ring in Bhool Bhulaiya. That the intricate maze called Bhool Bhulaiya can be a hiding place for such a valuable item seems almost unimaginable. The other thing which pleased me is that unlike the other detectives, Feluda does not always carry lethal weapons, though later he did have a revolver. Here Feluda's weapon is merely black pepper powder which is named *Churnamrito Brahmastra* by Feluda. In the last scene, when Mr. Sarkar's assistant Ganesh Guha tried to kill Feluda and Topshe by opening the box of rattle snake, Feluda prevents him by throwing the pepper powder on his face. It proves that even if the situation is tough Feluda always keeps his cool and gets out of the danger by using his "magajashtra". Feluda is really a remarkable character in Bengali detective novel, and remains popular to everybody even today. I feel very excited whenever I start to read an adventure of Feluda. *Badshahi Angti* starts this journey both for Feluda and for us.

The Fantastic Five: A Dream Sequence

- Md. Alfaz Khan, 2nd year, English Honours.

[A crowded drawing room]

Jatayu : No, No, No, Felubabu. I don't agree with you this time. Satyajit Sir is planning to make a movie on "Pather Panchali" based on the namesake novel by Bibhutibhusan Bandyopadhyay. It is his choice but in my opinion he must alter one part. Durga should live till the end.

Topshe: Yeah! Any dramatic change in the end is acceptable but not the death of Durga.

Feluda : Why don't you people understand? Durga was meant to have such connections with everyone and without her death the story would never had had the effect which it has till date, on every reader. What say Khuro?

Tarini Khuro: Felu is right. What seems to us as pathetic has actually been a tragic reality for the majority of poor families in Bengal. I have witnessed that myself and hence, I can say that what's true should be depicted in the film.

Professor Shonku: I am not aware of the conditions of the common people but I must and will surely appreciate Harihar for his affinity towards knowledge even in that severe condition of poverty.

Jatayu: Now we are diverging from the topic! Why should the film end as a tragedy if it is possible end it on a happy note! I feel that Ray Sir must exploit his freedom of 'director's license'. What say?

Topshe: Yeah! Why can't they go to see the train again as Durga promised Apu? Durga should live!

Tarini Khuro: Topse Babu, I understand the case of Lalmohan Babu. Ray Sir had filled too much emotion in him while creating. But you were designed to be much cleverer and realistic; so why are you taking his stand? Are you in love with Durga or something? [with his million dollar smile, staring at Topshe]

Feluda: On that note Khuro, I must say that each and everyone who will watch the film will be in love with Durga. Otherwise he or she can be surely said to be unaware of the essence of this masterpiece.

Professor Shonku: Surely! What great curiosity the girl is shown to have! She was inquisitive about each and everything. She wanted to know everything in detail- be it the "muktor mala" or the train or the railway tracks on the outskirts of the village.

Jatayu: Khuro! You were being personal! Who said that I am not into reality? Durga had a major role in shaping Apu's life, be it helping him with the daily work or chaperoning him into new adventures.

Topshe: I almost lived my dream childhood through the eyes of Apu and Durga. The feasts under the banyan tree, the hot *khichudi* lacking a little salt, roaming around freely on open fields! They almost feel like my other half! How can I accept if one of them dies?

Tarini Khuro: Okay then! If this is changing then I should suggest a change too. Call me old school but I don't like the family leaving their ancestral house and shifting somewhere else.

Feluda: Now you are not accepting the reality Khuro! Harihar was a poor man and he didn't have the funds to repair the fragile house. Moreover, his debts didn't allow him to sleep at night.

Jatayu: Talking of fragile house- when Harihar was on his way back from the trip he retorted on seeing the house-“can't be alive for a few more days?” and look at the irony! His daughter was no more. This almost brought tears into my eyes.

Professor Shonku: I very much agree. Moreover, when he handed over the saree for Durga to his wife I was too into tears.

[Enters Satyajit Ray]

Satyajit Ray: Ok my characters! Thank you all for your valuable opinions. But as I always say- *The only solution that are ever worth anything are the solution people find themselves.* So as you and all of your stories are successful I will myself find away to make this film a success too which will forever be in the hearts of every Bengali.

[My alarm clock rings and after waking up I realise the truth of Satyajit Sir's statement! Pather Panchali- The Film, still remains as an example of an absolute masterpiece.]



A Friend in Need/ Deed

- Subhajit Parbat, 2nd year, English Honours

Satyajit Ray was not only a film director but also a fantastic author. The fact that he created dynamic characters like Feluda, Professor Shanku, Tarinikhuro among many others, reflect his sheer literary talent.

He wrote many short stories, among which “Bonkubabur Bondhu” claims special attention. The story deals with a simple docile old man Bonku Babu's sudden encounter with an alien. Professionally a teacher at Kankurgachi primary school, Bonku Babu possesses an extremely meek character which lets others rag him on a regular basis. Sripati Majumdar is a lawyer who hosts evening gatherings in his house, and is surrounded by flatterers like Ramkanai, Bhairav Chakraborty, Nidhu Mokhtar and Chandi Babu. Ang, the alien, came to earth by accident that stemmed from problems in his spaceship.

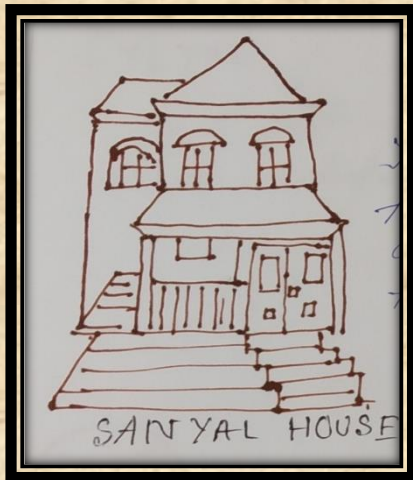
The title of the story "Bonku Babur Bondhu" clearly refers to Banku Babu's friend, but in reality, Banku Babu had no friends. He was simply an object of ridicule for most people around him. Everyone used to exploit his simplicity. The story begins with description of how students torture him in various ways. He never punishes anyone for this behaviour. No one in Banku babu's village has ever seen him angry, no one even knows what he looks like when he gets angry. But what used to bother him more than the behaviour of the students, was the treatment he received at Sripati's place. Sometimes he did feel angry with them. When they used to hide his umbrella and shoes, he felt actually very disturbed but never managed to gather the courage to protest. One day in the gathering, everyone was talking about rockets, satellites and aliens. People were saying if aliens came to earth, they would only come to western countries. They would never come to this village. Bonku Babu opposed such baseless notions, saying that aliens can land on any part of the world. For this he was once again targeted very harshly by the flatterers of Sripati. When he was returning to home that day, he met Ang-- an encounter which was going to change his life completely. Ang made him realise that softness in one's character is appreciable but one should not let others take that as a license to insult one. If someone bothers one too much, one should stand up against that. Ang was not a human! But his compassionate behaviour and wise advices truly made him a 'friend' of Banku Babu. Through this portrayal of the non-human, Ray shows that it is not necessary that only a human would have to be a friend of a fellow human. Anyone, even an animal or an alien can be a good friend of a human.

Here the story ends with a sudden change in Bonku Babu's character under the influence of Ang. The story is an excellent example of how friendship and empathy can spur between a human and a non-human.

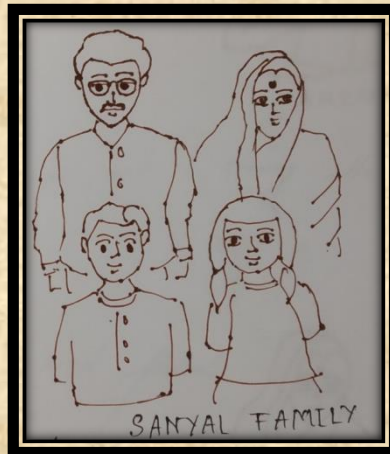


Tribute to Satyajit Ray- In the World of Characters

-Chidananda Mallick, 1st Year, English Honours.

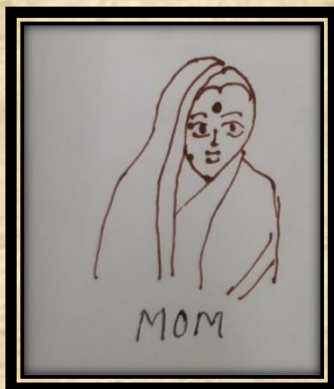


This is the Sanyal House. In this family there are four members- Mr. & Mrs. Sanyal, and their children- Arin and Tithi.



Arin is eleven years old while his sister is twelve. They attend the same school. Arin is in class seven and Tithi is in the eighth standard.

[ONE SUNDAY MORNING...]



MOM: Arin... Tithi... Where are you two? Come here immediately!

TITHI: Coming, Mom! Arin, Mom is calling!

ARIN: Oh! Shut up, di! I'm reading! Don't disturb me!

TITHI: Mom, Arin is not coming! He is reading.

MOM: Okay! You take this glass of milk and finish it. I'll check on him! ARIN...

ARIN: What are you up to?

ARIN: I am reading Satyajit Ray's Professor Shonku, mom. Yesterday I have completed Feluda

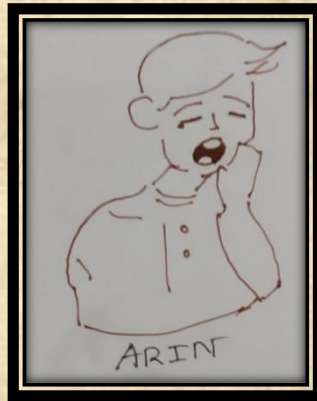
MOM: Alright. But at first you have to finish drinking the milk

ARIN: Mom, I am reading. Please. Can I drink it later?





MOM: No no.. No excuse, just finish it. Then you may read.



ARIN: Okay, Mom! (Drinking the milk)...

[Feeling sleepy]



ARIN: Where are we? This is a beach. Where is our home, di?

TITHI: We are lost Arin. Let's find a way to get out.

ARIN: Yes di .. Let's find it

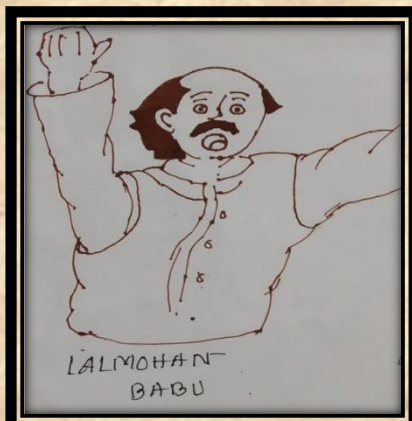
(Someone screaming)

Help..... ! Help.....! Someone please help!

TITHI: Arin, did you hear that?

ARIN: Yes, di...I can hear that someone is screaming for help!

TITHI: Let's go there!



(A middle aged man is running)

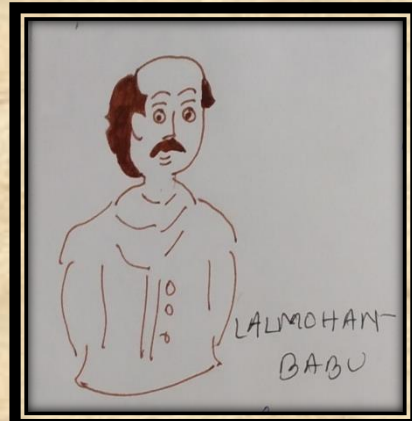
THE UNKNOWN MAN: Help help.... !

ARIN: Excuse me. Why are you running uncle? What happened?

THE UNKNOWN MAN: Oh dear! I am Lalmohan Ganguly aka Jatayu. I am lost. I am finding my friends

ARIN: By Jatayu, do you mean Feluda's Jatayu?

LALMOHAN GANGULY: Yes, dear..



ARIN: Oh god! I just can't believe this. Di, This is Jatayu, Feluda..

TITHI: You are right' Arin!

(The sound is coming from afar)

Lalmohan Babu...Lalmohan Babu!! Where are you?

LALMOHAN GANGULY: There they are.. Come on kids. We have found them.



FELUDA: Where have you been, Mr. Lalmohan Babu? And who are these kids?

MR. GANGULY: I was lost. I think these kids were also lost

ARIN: Yes, sir!

FELUDA: Don't worry kids. You will go back home safely. Call me Feluda. What are your names?

ARIN: I am Arin.

TITHI: And I am Tithi. But, Feluda, why are you here?

FELUDA: This is Africa's famous island Naunia. We came here for a vacation but we heard that a gang is smuggling ivory. So I'm investigating this case. I will catch the smugglers tomorrow. So kids, follow us.

ARIN: Okay, Feluda!

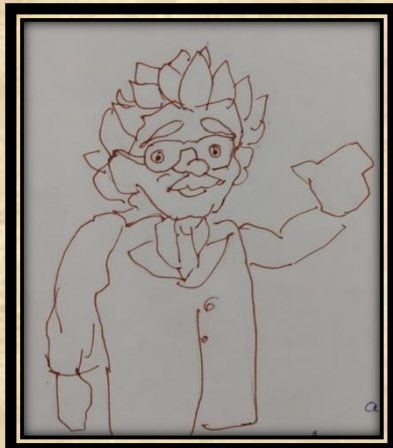
(A bear's growl is heard)

TOPSE: Feluda, did you hear that?

FELUDA: Yes, a bear growled nearby. We are in trouble! Look over there! It is huge!

(A pistol was fired and the bear vanished)

FELUDA: You must be Professor Shonku!



PROF. SHONKU: Yes, Mr. Mitter. I am Professor Shonku and this is ANNIHILLIN PISTOL. It can vanish any living object. Actually I am here for a research. I have also heard about the smuggling of ivory. Since I am here, I shall help you in this case.

FELUDA: Thank you so much Professor for rescuing us from the dangerous bear and saving our lives. But we must find a shelter soon. (Walking towards a clearing) Here we may rest.

ARIN: We are very tired. [Falls asleep really fast. Suddenly he hears a voice.]

TITHI: Arin... Arin... Wake up Arin..

(Sitting up with a start)

ARIN: What, di? Where are we? We were in the island. Where is Feluda and where is Professor Shonku?

TITHI: What? What are you talking about? You were sleeping. Now come on.. Mom is calling you.

ARIN: Sleeping?? Oh god! I was dreaming.. [Scratches his head]..

THE END

What's Next?

CALL FOR PAPERS

Literature and its acceptance have always played an important role in the evolution of the human world. Though some parts of it have often been stated to be acutely niche driven, there has always been a segment intended for the masses. Popular Literature or 'taishu bungaku' (Japanese for 'literature for the masses') was recognised as a genre universally in the early 20th century with the initiation of mass-production of reasonably priced books. Once regarded as 'escape reading' or 'junk reading', Popular Literature along with its several sub-genres, Detective Fiction being a prime, have presently made it to the shelves archived for scholarly and academic purposes.

The essence of detective themes has been borne in literature since classical times and yet it thrives notably till date. Over the years, even the English lingo has been seen to evolve with specific acceptances of detective-generic terms. Such is the prolificacy that in almost every case, a child or an amateur reader is suggested or gifted copies of Detective novels/books to enhance his or her interest in reading. The question of not only 'who' or 'how' but 'why' has intrigued man ever since!

Celebrating the modernity and contemporary nuances, *Kaleidoscope*, the webzine of the Department of English, Maheshtala College, invites articles and original write ups for its 2nd issue which is to be on **DETECTIVE FICTION**.

THEME: Detective Fiction **SUB-THEMES:** (not restrictive to given ones only)

- Detective Fiction in World/ Indian Literature
- Whodunnit
- The detective in Classical texts
- Cinematic adaptations
- Women as detective/ detective fiction authors.
- Detective fiction comic strips

DETAILS:

1. The last date for submission of the write ups is 31/08/2020.
2. The write ups have to be in English.
3. Font Style: Times New Roman; Font Size: 12
4. Word Limit: 300-500 (for students), 1500-2000 (for faculty members and research scholars)
5. The Word files containing the articles, a 2-line declaration of authenticity and your designations are to be mailed at english.maheshtalacollege@gmail.com .
6. For any query, contact english.maheshtalacollege@gmail.com , Department of English, Maheshtala College.

