



SATYAJIT RAY: THE LANGUAGE OF FILM

The Adversary

Ray on 'The Adversary'

Did you consciously set out with the idea that Days and Nights in the Forest, The Adversary and Company Limited would form a new trilogy?

I didn't think of it during the first two films. I made *Days and Nights* because I liked the story, and as for *The Adversary*... well, I made it because the situation in Calcutta was politically so tense. The students were very active, there was a lot of violence in the city, and if I was going to make another film it seemed it had to be about Calcutta and the young people there. Then last year I read the novel *Company Limited* is based on, and I immediately thought that this was an important theme. After describing the young man looking for a job in *The Adversary*, it was relevant for me to describe the people who have control over the jobs, the new upper class, the new breed that has grown up in India since Independence. You see, in a sense the British have not really left...

You seem in this new trilogy to have acquired a political awareness which was perhaps less openly stated in your previous films.

Possibly, but politics has also come increasingly to the surface in the last three or four years. You feel it every moment of the day in Calcutta: not just the bombs and the explosions, but meeting people and walking the streets with the posters on the walls. Of course I have never been unaware of politics, but I have deliberately not used political issues as such in my films because I have always felt that in India politics is a very impermanent thing. Political parties break up very quickly, and I don't believe in the Left as such any more. There are now three communist parties in India, and I don't really see what that means.

How have the three films been received in India?

Before I made *The Adversary*, I'd often been criticised for being non-political. After that film, they thought I had become politically committed, and it was very well received. There's a revolutionary character in *The Adversary*, which is enough for the more simple-minded people. They don't see the depths of the film, they just see that there is some mention of politics. But my previous film, *Days and Nights in the Forest*, wasn't understood in India. They thought it very frivolous because of its surface, but they completely missed the implications of the structure, which I think makes it one of my best pictures.

The second film in the trilogy, The Adversary, got a lukewarm reception from some European critics, who suggested that from a stylistic point of view it was more hesitant and less structurally complete than your other work. You use a lot of flashbacks, dream sequences, and scenes in negative. Why the change of style?

Everything I did was of course quite deliberate. I think the main character always dictates the style of a film; and particularly in this case, where you identify totally with the young man. He's a hesitant character, full of doubts and inner conflicts and problems, and with him at the centre of the film I couldn't think in terms of a smoothly told story in my usual 'classical' style. I

felt all the time I was writing the scenario that if it took a straightforward line and was stylistically orthodox, then it would be wrong. That's why I introduced stylistic factors which are new in my work.

The film opens for instance with the death of the father, shown in negative, and there were many reasons for doing it that way. The scene describes the death of a person whom you don't know, and who is not a character in the film. It is a totally impersonal death scene, and death is very difficult to portray on the screen. If it had been in positive, everybody might have looked for signs of life because they are not emotionally involved with this character. And that mustn't happen: the theme must immediately capture the audience. So I started with negative, and since I had done it once I thought, why not do it again later. In the dream sequence I also find it perfectly valid; and I use the effect in another sequence, which might equally well have been in positive. That's the scene where a friend takes the young man to a prostitute, and he becomes disgusted and runs away. At one point the prostitute starts to undress, and she is just in her bra and lights a cigarette. Bengali girls don't usually smoke in public, and in India the audience is very conservative, so to soften the impact of that scene I used negative.

The problem with the young man in *The Adversary* is that there are a lot of things going on in his head, and he has no one to communicate his thoughts to. For instance, he goes to see his sister's boss, and suddenly – bang-bang-bang – he stands there with a revolver shooting the boss. And then you find out that this is only happening in his mind. In fact, he had been rather polite and nervous, so how could I suggest that he actually wanted to murder the boss? There was no way other than an imaginary flash-forward.

Since people have become used to a certain classical style in my films, I knew the criticisms would come. If it had been the work of an unknown director, the critics would probably have accepted it. But I really don't care about the criticism, and maybe in five or six years when they see it in retrospect, they will find it all right. And I wanted it to be apparent also in the style that this was my first political film: a different film from what I had done before, so let it be different.

But still, you chose to make the film about the young man who has doubts about his role in society, whereas his brother, who is a revolutionary, is a background character. If you wanted it to be a really political film, why didn't you make it about the revolutionary?

Because a person with a definite political line is often psychologically less interesting: revolutionaries don't think for themselves all the time. I was more interested in the young man who didn't have any firm political convictions and who wanted a job under no matter what regime. He thought for himself, and therefore he was suffering. Besides, he carries out an act of protest on a personal level, which to me is a marvellous thing because it comes from inside and not as an expression of a political ideology.

Satyajit Ray interviewed by Christian Braad Thomsen, *Sight and Sound*, Winter 1972/3

THE ADVERSARY (PRATIDWANDI)

Director: Satyajit Ray

Production Company: Priya Films

Producers: Nepal Dutta, Asim Dutta

Screenplay: Satyajit Ray

From the novel by: Sunil Ganguli

Photography: Soumendu Roy, Purnendu Bose

Editor: Dulal Dutta

Art Director: Bansi Chandragupta

Music: Satyajit Ray

Sound: J.D. Irani, Durgadas Mitra

Cast

Dhritiman Chatterjee (*Siddhartha Choudhury*)

Indira Devi (*Sarojini*)

Debraj Roy (*Tunu*)

Krishna Bose (*Sutapa*)

Kalyan Chowdhury (*Siben*)

Joysree Roy (*Keya*)

Sefali (*Lotika*)

Soven Lahiri (*Sanyal*)

Pisu Majumdar (*Keya's father*)

Dhara Roy (*Keya's aunt*)

Mamata Chatterjee (*Sanyal's wife*)

India 1970

110 mins

New 4K restoration by NFDC – National Film Archive of India

SATYAJIT RAY**THE LANGUAGE OF FILM****The Philosopher's Stone (Parash Pathar)**

Fri 1 Jul 20:35; Sun 10 Jul 18:20

The Zoo Chiriyakhana

Sat 2 Jul 12:00; Sun 10 Jul 12:20

The Adversary (Pratidwandi)

Sat 2 Jul 15:10; Sun 10 Jul 15:30

Pather Panchali (Song of the Little Road)

Sun 3 Jul 18:20; Sat 9 Jul 12:00; Sat 30 Jul 14:30

The Film Language of Satyajit Ray

Wed 6 Jul 18:00

The Middleman (Jana Aranya)

Wed 6 Jul 20:20; Sun 24 Jul 18:10

Two Daughters: The Postmaster and Samapti (The Conclusion)

+ intro by Aparna Sen

Thu 7 Jul 17:50

The Unvanquished (Aparajito)

Sat 9 Jul 15:00; Thu 14 Jul 18:15; Sat 30 Jul 17:40

The World of Apu (Apu Sansar)

Sat 9 Jul 17:50; Sat 16 Jul 20:45; Sat 30 Jul 20:30

+ pre-recorded intro

Raahgir (The Wayfarers)

Mon 11 Jul 18:00

Company Limited (Seemabaddha)

Wed 13 Jul 18:20; Tue 26 Jul 20:45

Satyajit Ray: His Home and the World

Sat 16 Jul 12:00-17:00

Satyajit Ray Documentaries Programme 1: Rabindranath Tagore

+ The Inner Eye + Sukumar Ray

Sat 16 Jul 18:30; Sun 31 Jul 12:00

The Adventures of Goopy and Bagha Goopy (Gyne ar Bagha Byne)

Sun 17 Jul 13:00; Sat 23 Jul 12:10

The Golden Fortress (Sonar Kella)

Sun 17 Jul 15:40; Wed 27 Jul 18:00

Branches of the Tree (Shakha Proshakha)

Sun 17 Jul 18:10; Sat 30 Jul 12:20

The Kingdom of Diamonds (Hirak Rajar Deshe)

Mon 18 Jul 18:10; Sat 23 Jul 14:50

Joi Baba Felunath (The Elephant God)

Tue 19 Jul 18:10; Mon 25 Jul 20:40

The Stranger (Agantuk)

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