



SATYAJIT RAY: THE LANGUAGE OF FILM

Company Limited (Seemabaddha)

Satyajit Ray on 'Company Limited'

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. It's a complex film with seven characters, and in its final form very satisfying to me.

In Company Limited there is also a revolutionary character in the background. In fact, we don't see him at all, but we learn that he is the boyfriend of the sister-in-law, the character who is obviously the moral centre of the film.

Yes, but in a way the sister-in-law is in a tragic situation, because she came to Calcutta in order to find out what social success was like, and what her elder sister's life with her executive husband was like. She's disheartened by

what she finds, but on the other hand she is not so sure that she can go back to the revolutionary and marry him. She doesn't know how seriously involved with him she is. The brother-in-law asks her why she didn't tell him she had a boyfriend. And she says: 'If there was anything, I would have told you.' She is in Calcutta because she had this great weakness for her brother-in-law, when she was a little girl in her teens. She hasn't seen him for six or seven years, and now that maybe he's such a success, let's see what he is like, whether he has completely changed or whether he is still a human being. Let's see if it's possible to remain a human being in his circumstances. So she arrives, and at first everything seems all right. But when the crisis comes at the factory, he collapses completely. It's evident then that he can only think about his own success, his own career going ahead no matter at what cost.

But isn't it your intention to suggest that this girl, and her relationship to the revolutionary, really poses a moral and political solution to the problems the film raises?

Well, in a way she is in the same situation as the boy in *The Adversary*. She's uncertain, though at the end of the film she probably will go back to the revolutionary because she's so completely disillusioned with the other kind of life she has witnessed. But she first needed to be exposed to this kind of life in order to make her decision. I always feel that you must know two sides of a problem before you can make up your mind. Then you can make a really strong decision which, as in *The Adversary*, is not based on the dictates of an ideology but mainly springs from your own, human experience.

This is another interesting aspect of your political films, that they don't resemble...

... the films of Godard and Glauber Rocha and the rest? No, certainly not, because I still believe in the individual and in personal concepts rather than in a broad ideology, which keeps changing all the time.

On a political level, your films are strongly critical of the executive class, but it's vital to the films that you still try to understand the members of that class on a human level.

Absolutely. Even the British we had to understand, because the whole intellectual middle class of India is a product of British rule. Without the colonialism and the British education, there would have been no terrorism. The British gave the Bengalis a liberal education, which ultimately turned them into revolutionaries. And it's ironical that the British really created their own enemies. It took about a hundred years, and the beginning of this development is described in *Charulata*, when they start through newspapers to question the British rule. And in the early 20th century you have the first terrorist movement against the British. That had no support from the peasants or the working class. It was a small intellectual group, whose leaders had read all the revolutionary literature, Garibaldi and the rest. They wanted to get rid of the British, and they thought: why not throw bombs at them? It didn't achieve anything; it was just an emotional gesture. But emotional gestures fascinate me more than ideological gestures.

In Company Limited, how far are you suggesting that the main character is essentially a product of bad social circumstances, rather than bad in himself?

It is certainly the system that makes him what he is. He's part of a bureaucratic and commercial machine, which has no place for one single man. If you want to live in a society, you immediately become part of the

pattern, and that drives you into something you may not have been from the beginning. This man clearly has two sides: he has his private feelings and his conscience, but the system forces him to disassemble them and to think only of his security and advancement. But it's an open film and it doesn't make any final statement.

The bombings one hears in Company Limited, from the big flat of the business man above Calcutta ... are those explosions set off by left-wing groups?

Yes, and the irony is that very often they are caused by Left fighting Left. The tragedy is that the Left is split into so many groups, who are their own bitterest enemies. They don't fight the liberals or the conservatives. They don't attack the real targets, like the big industrialists, because they are afraid of losing. Instead, they attack each other.

Interview by Christian Braad Thomsen, *Sight and Sound*, Winter 1972/3

COMPANY LIMITED (SEEMABADDHA)

Director: Satyajit Ray

Production Company: Chitranjali

Producer: Bharat Shamsheer Jung Bahadur Rana

Screenplay: Satyajit Ray

From the novel by: Sankar

Photography: Soumendu Roy

Editor: Dulal Dutta

Art Director: Asok Bose

Music: Satyajit Ray

Sound: J.D. Irani, Durgadas Mitra

Cast

Barun Chanda (*Syamal Chatterjee*)

Sharmila Tagore (*Sudarsana, known as Tutul*)

Parumita Chowdhury (*Syamal's wife*)

Harindranath Chatterjee (*Sir Baren Roy*)

Haradhan Banerjee (*Talukdar*)

Indira Roy (*Syamal's mother*)

Promod Ganguli (*Syamal's father*)

India 1971

112 mins

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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)

Thu 21 Jul 20:40; Sun 31 Jul 18:20

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