



The Life of the Adivasis

Adivasiyon Ka Jeevan Srot

Director: Ritwik Ghatak

Sponsor: Government of Bihar

India 1955

13 mins

Digital 4K (restoration)

The Pathetic Fallacy Ajantrik

Director: Ritwik Ghatak

Production Company: L & B Films International

Screenplay: Ritwik Ghatak

Story: Subodh Ghosh

Director of Photography: Dinen Gupta

Editor: Ramesh Joshi

Music: Ali Akbar Khan

Cast:

Kali Banerjee (*Bimal*)

Gyanesh Mukherjee

Gangapada Bose

Satindra Bhattacharya

Shriman Deepak

Kajal Gupta

India 1958

102 mins

Digital 4K (restoration)

The screening on Tue 21 Jun will be introduced by
season curator Sanghita Sen

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Revolutionary Cinema: The Passion of Ritwik Ghatak

The Pathetic Fallacy

Ritwik Ghatak on 'The Pathetic Fallacy (Ajantrik)'

For 12 long years, I had thought about this story before I made it into a film. When it first came my way, accidentally, I was a green boy, newly come to Calcutta and fresh from the university. *Ajantrik* caught my imagination and held it for ten days at a stretch – for more reason than the alliteration with my name.

I thought about it for a long time in a vague and general sort of way. Never concretely. What struck me most was its philosophical implication. Here was a story which sought to establish a new relationship in our literature – the very significant and inevitable relationship between man and machine.

Our literature, in fact our culture itself (i.e. the culture of middle-class city-dwellers) has never cared very much for the machine age. The idea of the machine has always had an association of monstrosity for us. It devours all that is good, all that is contemplative and spiritual. It is something that is alien to the spirit of our culture – the spirit of ancient, venerable India. It stands for clash and clangour, for swift, destructive change, for fermenting discontent.

I am not a sociologist. I cannot explain the phenomenon. This apathy may be due to the fact that all change and the very introduction of the machine age was the handiwork of foreign overlords. It might have more comprehensive causes, encompassing all the pangs of Western civilization. But the end-product of all these causes seems to be an ideological streak which is doing immense harm in all practical spheres of life.

This attitude is hardly compatible with the objective truth as it obtains in present-day India. Or in our future, for that matter. With all our newly achieved technology, we have yet to find ways of integrating the future into our heritage, what is on the order of the day is an emotional integration of this machine age.

And that is precisely what *Ajantrik*, the story, has achieved for the first time in our literature. It has achieved it in a unique, and in my opinion, a typically Indian way. It contains that quaint Indigenous flavour in its plot structure, its characterisation, its very style of narration.

Also, it rings true. It rings true in every line of it. I have seen such men (I have had the doubtful pleasure of meeting Bimal himself in real life) and have been able to believe in their emotions. There lies the greatest source of power of the story.

I had a chance and made the film. It was fun all the way through – it is still fun while it is grossing exactly nothing at the box-office.

There were other points of attraction for me.

Firstly, the story is laid in a terrain which is one of the least-known to normal Bengali filmgoers. They have no emotional attachment with it. Try however I might, I could not peddle in nostalgic sentimentalism, which is the curse of many a fine worker in this country. I had to create new values, all within the span of the film itself. On the other hand I could cash in on the novelty of the landscape. The different planes and levels are refreshingly unusual to the plainsmen of the Gangetic delta.

Secondly, the tribal people. They are the people who own the land where the story is laid. Without them the landscape would lose its charm and meaning.

Revolutionary Cinema: The Passion of Ritwik Ghatak

The Citizen Nagarik

Mon 1 Jun 20:35; Fri 26 Jun 18:05 (+ intro by Ashvin Devasundaram, Queen Mary University of London)

Ritwik Ghatak Season Introduction:

A River Called Ritwik

Tue 2 Jun 18:15

The Pathetic Fallacy Ajantrik

Tue 2 Jun 20:30 (+ intro by season curator Sanghita Sen); Sun 21 Jun 18:30

Incomplete Works

Wed 3 Jun 17:50 (+ intro by season curator Sanghita Sen); Sat 20 Jun 18:10

Reason, Debate and a Story

Jukti Takko Aar Gappo

Wed 3 Jun 20:25 (+ intro by season curator Sanghita Sen); Tue 30 Jun 20:40

The Traveller Musafir

Sat 6 Jun 20:10; Sun 14 Jun 18:00

Shorts and Documentaries

Sun 7 Jun 12:30; Mon 22 Jun 18:30

The Uprooted Chinnamul

Mon 8 Jun 20:35; Sat 20 Jun 12:15

Subarnarekha The Golden Line

Wed 10 Jun 20:25; Sun 28 Jun 12:00

(+ pre-recorded intro)

The Cloud-Capped Star Meghe Dhaka Tara

Thu 11 Jun 18:00 (+ intro by Manishita Dass, author of *BFI Film Classic: The Cloud-Capped Star*); Sat 27 Jun 14:40

A River Called Titas Titash Ekti Nadir Naam

Sat 13 Jun 14:20 (+ intro by Tanjil Rashid, Culture Editor at the *New Statesman*); Sun 28 Jun 14:50

E-Flat Komol Gandhar

Sat 13 Jun 20:20; Sat 27 Jun 17:30

(+ pre-recorded intro)

The Runaway Bari Theke Paliye

Wed 17 Jun 18:00 (+ intro by Agni Lahiri, film protagonist's son and producer's grandson); Sat 27 Jun 12:10

The Diamond Butterfly Heerer Prajapati

Sun 21 Jun 15:15; Sun 28 Jun 18:15

In partnership with



On the birth centenary of Ritwik Ghatak, NFDC-NFAI carried out unprecedented digital preservation of his entire filmography including feature length films, numerous shorts, documentaries and unfinished works, all under the National Film Heritage Mission. The eight features have been restored in 4K from various film elements preserved by NFDC-NFAI and West Bengal State Film Archive, with colour grading supervised by renowned Indian cinematographer Avik Mukhopadhyay.

I cannot marshal my camera on any spot without integrating them into my composition.

Also, it is a silly story. Only silly people can identify themselves with a man who believes that godforsaken car has life. Silly people like children, simple folk like peasants, animists like tribals. To us city folks, it is a story of a crazy man.

Especially, the machine retards us. Had it been a bullock or an elephant or some other animal object, it would not have been so difficult. We could imagine ourselves in love with a river or a stone. But a machine – there we draw the line.

But these people do not have that difficulty. They are constantly in the process of assimilating anything new that comes their way. In all our folk art the signs of such assimilation are manifest.

This process is even more marked among the tribal people of Central India. And the tribe I chose – the Oraons – are very culture-minded and have this tendency in a pronounced manner. I had a nodding acquaintance with them, having been among them as a documentary filmmaker for about five years. And I wondered at their vigorous imagination again and again. They would fully understand Bimal, for they themselves are like him.

The Oraons have the same attitude to externals which is the emotional thesis of this story. I found an affinity between their pathetic fallacy and Bimal's. For this reason they provided the ideal setting for this film. I could utilise their many significant customs. The different moods created by their high-living Buirakhis (Hags) titled at different angles and dangled in different tempo is an expression of the most artistic temperament. I admit that these and many other things were too specialised in their meaning to have any general significance. But if I could go on integrating them into my pattern of things in a consistent manner, I could hope to arrive at a cumulative effect which would be a major contributing factor beyond just local colour.

Thirdly, the story has a ramshackle car as its central character. This very fact threw up so many plastic and dynamic potentialities. I could always fall back upon mechanical speed – what with opportunities of bringing in the time-honoured mechanism of the chase and hair's breadth escapes and breakdowns at judiciously chosen moments!

Fourthly, we had to work with the poorest possible materials and that too, on a shoestring budget. This film threw before us a challenge at every step. Every shot taken was every shot achieved. This seemed to me to be really invigorating. It is a situation in which one curses oneself at every step and likes it.

All these considerations drove me to *Ajantrik*, and I jumped at the first opportunity to make it.

Ritwik Ghatak, 'Some Thoughts on *Ajantrik*', *Cinema and I* (Ritwik Memorial Trust, 1987)

The Life of the Adivasis

A compassionate depiction of the tribal peoples living in Bihar, written by and featuring the voice of acclaimed Hindi author and screenwriter Radhakrishna.