



Rendezvous

Director: Rajendra Nath Shukla

India 1965

13 mins

Digital 4K (restoration)

Courtesy of Film and Television Institute of India



The Chhau Dance of Purulia

Purulia Chhou Nritya

Director: Ritwik Ghatak

India 1970

13 mins

Digital 4K (restoration)

The Question Yeh Kyun

Director: Ritwik Ghatak

India 1970

20 mins

Digital 4K (restoration)

Where the Padma Flows Durbar Gati Padma

Director: Ritwik Ghatak

India 1971

22 mins

Digital 4K (restoration)

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Revolutionary Cinema: The Passion of Ritwik Ghatak

Shorts and Documentaries

Rendezvous

Ghatak supervised this diploma film made by students at the Film Institute of India.

The Chhau Dance of Purulia

A folk-cultural form, Purulia's Chhau fuses myth and martial rhythm.

The Question

The film speaks against religious fundamentalism and favours intercommunal harmony.

Where the Padma Flows

This documentary was made in support of Bangladesh Liberation War.

Ritwik Ghatak on documentary filmmaking

Actually, in the truly creative sense, the documentary is an attitude. The truth lies in reality, and the camera is eminently capable and uniquely suited to recording physical reality in all its varied aspects. It becomes a duty and an onus on the artist to record them and present them in an artistic manner.

That is why the documentary is the most exciting and most valid and legitimate form of cinema.

And that is why the borderline between story-film and documentary is broken again and again by all the great artists in all the periods of the history of the cinema.

Lumière's 'documentary' on *A Train's Arrival at the Station* or *The Practical Joke of the Hose with the Gardener*, truly performed the duties of cinema – just as *Pather Panchali* did. And, in the documentary it is a wrong notion that subjective assessments, generalisation, compression, seeking the essence – these do not play a part. They very much do.

Almost all the great masters of cinema today have made documentaries sometime or other, even in the conventional sense of the term – Resnais, Antonioni, Satyajit, Karel Reisz. Roman Polanski made his famous [*Two Men and a Wardrobe*] film before he made *Knife in the Water* which got the Critics Award at Venice. The younger French experimentalists periodically make documentaries between their features – some regularly buzz off to Cuba to make them (Cuba being very much in need of such talents.)

In our country this has not yet developed. There are the economic factors – a generally low standard of living and lack of enlightened sponsorship.

But potentially, India is one of the richest countries to be exploited by the camera – and almost all of it still virgin. Some foreigners have come and done some work (Arne Sucksdorff spent some years in the country and made two films on Kashmir and *The Flute and The Arrow*).

Then, the American television people are coming more and more nowadays to cover different aspects of the Indian scene. These, along with the efforts of Films Division directors – some of whose works are really exciting – are not adequate by themselves.

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

Here, I think, is a vacuum which can be filled up by the big commercial houses. I think some serious efforts have been there, but judging from the results, it appears that not much headway has been made.

Though I have no direct experience of such things, I may venture to surmise about the difficulties of turning out worthwhile documentary films – of course, from the point of view of the filmmaker.

The first thing is the question of audience. Creative documentaries of feature or semi-feature length have absolutely no chance of public circulation in India, except as a miracle. And I don't think the commercial houses should aim at such audiences.

So-called 'prestige' films made for specialised audiences generally fall between two stools.

The audience to be aimed at by such sponsors should be the major international film festivals. And the aim should be the top prizes. That way lies the creation of goodwill and development of public relations. A film winning applause in such a festival is bound to create interest in any country of the world, and such a film, for its cultural value, is bound to be an object of discussion amongst the right set of people in society in those countries.

This aim, and a clear idea about the audience to be approached (via festivals) are half the battle won.

And such films should not and cannot cost very much. The documentary films that are being sponsored by such concerns are being paid for by fantastic amounts of money anyway. With much less expenditure much better and longer films can easily be turned out.

The next difficulty that comes to my mind is the method of sponsorship and the way of handling the filmmaking proper.

Ritwik Ghatak, 'Cinema and I' (Ritwik Memorial Trust, 1987)

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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.

Programme notes and credits compiled by Sight and Sound and the BFI Documentation Unit

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