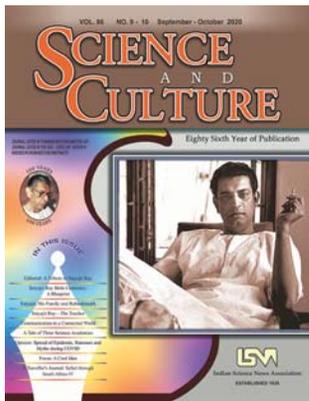


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EDITORIAL

A TRIBUTE TO SATYAJIT RAY



We Indians missed the excitement of the announcement “**And the winner is ...**” on the stage of the Oscar Awards ceremony while waiting with nail-biting silence to hear the announcement of the Oscar being awarded to Satyajit Ray. It is true that the Award came to Satyajit Ray quite

late (1991). But Ray is the only Indian who had the distinction of receiving an Honorary Academy Award (Statuette), an Oscar for Lifetime Achievement “in recognition of his rare mastery of the art of motion pictures, and of his profound humanitarian outlook, which has had an indelible influence on filmmakers and audiences throughout the world.”

Nominations for Oscar are invited every year from around the world and each country can send their entries for the award through some recognized groups or organizations. India had never been an appropriate contestant for receiving the award as compared with other nations like France, Italy or Russia. In the category of best Foreign Language Film (film made in a language other than English), which is now renamed as International Film, India fell behind many developing countries of the world like Ivory Coast, Algeria, Argentina

and also behind small countries like Denmark, Holland and Switzerland.

Critics believe that the year 1957 could have been the Oscar year for India had *Pather Panchali* been sent as nomination instead of *Mother India* which lost out to *The Nights of Cabiria* (Italy) at the final stage. *Pather Panchali* won a prize at Cannes, the President of India’s Gold medal and many other awards the year before. The Academy is known for its amendment of previous lapses or for missing out on deserving personalities deliberately or unintentionally. History is replete with many such examples like Orson Welles, actor, director and producer of *Citizen Kane* (1941), the film which featured regularly in the list of ‘ten best’ motion pictures but failed to receive

an Oscar for reasons known to cine critics. However, the Academy made amends by awarding the Honorary Oscar to Welles in 1970. The same happened to Charlie Chaplin who was denied Oscar for his leftist attitude and became a non-person for the Hollywood establishment. The Academy made amends by awarding him the Honorary Award (Statuette) later in

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1971 “for the incalculable effect he has had in making motion pictures the art form of this century.”

Satyajit Ray was born in a family of intellectual lineage. His father Sukumar Ray was a writer and poet. His grandfather Upendrakishore Ray Chowdhuri was a writer and painter. He was the first to introduce modern block making including half-tone and colour. Eventually,

he founded what was then probably the finest printing press in South Asia in 1914 at 100 Garpar Road (across the office of Science and Culture) where Satyajit Ray lived until the age of six. Satyajit Ray grew up in an atmosphere where he spent his afternoons with the block makers, composers and camera operators. This very atmosphere in the family was a source of inspiration to Satyajit Ray's artistry and creativity.

His official visit to London in summer, to the head office of the Advertising Agency that he worked for, gave him a chance to watch classic films and other masterpieces, which he missed when he was in Calcutta. This experience probably inspired him to be a film maker of a different genre. On his voyage back home he completed the script of *Pather Panchali*. *Pather Panchali* (1955) (Song of the Little Road) was cited in the Cannes Prize as 'the best human document'. *Pather Panchali* was followed by *Aparajito* (1956) (The Unvanquished) and *Apur Sansar* (1959) (The world of Apu). All these films depicted the cycle of life in the backdrop of rural Bengal which revealed Ray's skill to depict the scenes vividly and is now famed as the Apu Trilogy. Some people are of the opinion that Apu Trilogy appealed to the class of people from urban India and abroad because of the depiction of life in rural Bengal which was not so well known to these people. He presented with equal precision the city life in his Calcutta based quartet *Mahanagar* (1963) (The Great City), *Pratidwandi* (1970) (The Adversary), *Seemabadhha* (1971) (Company Limited), and *Jana Aranya* (1976) (The Middleman).

The current year marks the birth centenary of Satyajit Ray - a film maker, director, writer, artist, an outstanding

icon of art and literature, probably holding a place very next to Rabindranath Tagore. The country is currently gripped with the Covid pandemic and all its hindrances with the result that not much of celebrations could be made to mark the birth centenary of this brilliant personality. However, *Science and Culture* being a journal of natural and culture sciences decided to pay their homage to this maestro on this historic occasion by featuring some writings on Satyajit Ray as seen from varied perspectives.

In this issue, we have articles on Satyajit Ray by three exclusive persons, all of whom are creative writers and have analyzed the different characteristics of Ray. Amitabha Bhattacharya, an essayist, is well conversant with Ray's works and had reviewed his book *Our Films,*

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Their Films. The review work brought him in close contact with Ray and through his conversations with this great personality, he discovered how the accomplishments of the person can be commemorated both nationally and internationally on this momentous occasion.

Prasadranjan Ray, an author and essayist, belongs to the Ray family itself and his article highlights the enduring relationship that the family of Satyajit Ray had with Rabindranath Tagore through various intriguing anecdotes. Rochona Majumdar, an Associate Professor at the Departments of South Asian Languages and Civilizations, Cinema and Media Studies at the University of Chicago, USA, has depicted the teacher in Satyajit Ray on film pedagogy through her article. I hope readers will enjoy reading the different facets of this outstanding personality, a person who is well known in every household of Bengal, India, if not the whole world. □

S. C. Roy