

SATYAJIT, HIS FAMILY AND RABINDRANATH: AN ENDURING RELATION

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Satyajit Ray (1921-1992) is known throughout the world as a film-maker but he had also made major contributions in the fields of literature, music, art and printing, as had his father Sukumar and grandfather Upendrakisor before him. These family connections brought him close to Tagore and some of his ideas, though he was only 20 when Rabindranath passed away. It is all the more relevant for the journal *Science and Culture* because the activities of all three spanned the worlds of science, technology and culture. In an article, Satyajit had referred to “a relation with Rabindranath spanning three generations”. Punyalata Chakrabarti, in her memoir *Chhelebelar Dinguli* (1958), and Lila Majumdar, in her biography *Upendrakisor* (1963) had referred to the close relations between Satyajit’s grandfather Upendrakisor and Rabindranath.

But the direct impact of his lineage has clearly been discussed only in Chandak Sengupta’s book *The Rays before Satyajit : Creativity and Modernity in Colonial India* (2016).

The Ray family (earlier known as Deb, Majumdar, Khasnabish or Raychaudhuri) were Kayastha by caste and had migrated from Chakdah in the 16th century to distant villages of Sherpur, Yasodal and Egarosindur before settling down at Masua village of Mymensingh district (currently Kishoreganj district) across the old course of the Brahmaputra river. Satyajit’s great grandfather (and incidentally my own) Kalinath Ray (circa. 1830-1880) (also known as Shyamsundar Munshi) was an expert in land records and proficient in Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian. Kalinath and his wife Joytara had five sons - Saradaranjan,



Figure 1. Satyajit Ray

This picture has been received from the personal collection of Shri Debashish Sen who is an author and photographer attached to Sandesh, currently working at Centre for Rural and Cryogenic Studies, Jadavpur University. We are grateful to Shri Sen.

Kamadaranjan (1863-1915), Muktidaranjan, Kuladaranjan and Pramadaranjan, apart from three daughters. In a couple of years, his second son Kamadaranjan was adopted by Kalinath’s distant cousin zamindar and lawyer Harikisor Raychaudhuri and named Upendrakisor by his adoptive father. Thus, Upendrakisor went into a different family, though related, but the two families continued to live side by side.

All of Kalinath’s sons built distinctive careers but the first two were the most brilliant. Saradaranjan was a professor and principal, a great teacher of Mathematics and Sanskrit, apart from becoming known as the ‘Father

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of Bengal Cricket'. He was also a devout Hindu, devoted to traditional Hindu rituals. Upendrakisor, on the other hand, had come under the influence of the Brahma Samaj during his school days in Mymensingh and after completing his graduation in Kolkata, he embraced the Brahma faith. Two of his brothers Kuladaranjan and Pramadaranjan also joined the Brahma Samaj under his influence while Muktidaranjan, professor of Mathematics and Sanskrit and a brilliant athlete, remained a devout Hindu like Saradaranjan. Their youngest sister Mrinalini also married Hemendramohan Bose (better known as H. Bose), scion of a distinguished Brahma family and a famous entrepreneur. However, relations between the siblings continued to be extremely cordial.

In 1885, after graduation, Upendrakisor married Bidhumukhi, daughter of firebrand Brahma leader Dwarakanath Ganguli, and moved away from orthodoxy, though his adoptive father was a leader of the orthodox faction of the Hindus in Kishoreganj. He became involved in the running of the children's magazine 'Sakha' during his student days where he largely wrote illustrated articles on science. This love of children's literature continued throughout his life, though he set up his own printing and reprographic company which became known as U. Ray & Sons, Artist, Photoengraver, Art Printer and Publisher. He became famous for several of his children's books, particularly 'Tuntunir Boi' (1910) and his children's magazine 'Sandesh' (1913) but he did not remain confined to narrow, sectoral interests. He was also an artist, a musician and a remarkable technocrat who improvised such techniques in half-tone printing that drew international attention. No less than nine of his articles on process-printing were printed in Penrose's Pictorial Annual over 1897-1912, as well as one in the British Journal of Photography. His grandson Satyajit observed "Upendrakishore embodied a remarkable fusion of science and art, of East and West. He played the pakhwaj as well as the violin, conducted original research in printing technology, whilst composing Brahma devotional hymns, studied the heavens with a telescope from the roof of his house, retold the epics and rural tales in inimitably lucid prose for children, and also used oil and watercolour, or pen and ink, to produce pictures that were consummately Western in style".

Upendrakisor came close to Rabindranath during his early days in Calcutta, though they belonged to different branches of the Brahma Samaj. It is believed that he visited Jorasanko regularly and often accompanied Rabindranath's songs with his pakhwaj or violin. A concrete proof of their

closeness can be seen in the nicknames of his eldest children Sukhalata (Hasi) and Sukumar (Tata), clearly patterned on Rabindranath's immortal child characters created in his 'Rajarshi', published in 1885. Upendrakisor wrote articles for Rabindranath's 'Sadhana' in 1892-93. At Rabindranath's request, Upendrakisor drew several pictures to accompany his poem 'Nadi' published as a book in 1896. Rabindranath was very fond of his paintings and one of his paintings of the Chunar Fort hung over the poet's working table at the Silaidaha kuthi. Upendrakisor was also friendly with Dwarakanath Ghosh, the improviser of the 'Dwarkin Flute', the earliest table harmonium, who was very close to both Jyotirindranath and Rabindranath. Upendrakisor had suggested the name 'Dwarkin' and his earliest books 'Harmonium Siksha' and 'Behala Siksha' were published from Dwarkin Press. Upendrakisor's earliest children's books 'Chheleder Ramayan' (2nd edition, 1908) and 'Chheleder Mahabharat' (1909) were thoroughly edited by Rabindranath to make the language acceptable to children (as stated in the author's introductory remarks). He is believed to be the first to write the musical notations of several Tagore songs, though not acknowledged in full by Vishwabharati.

Though never directly involved in politics, Upendrakisor is known to have walked in the procession on Rakhibandhan day in 1905 in protest against the Partition of Bengal, accompanying the poet's rendition of 'Banglar Mati, Banglar Jal'. Later, he again accompanied Rabindranath in the historic Town Hall meeting. He also translated three Tagore songs for A.H. Fox Strangways' 'The Music of Hindostan' (1914). The greatest achievement of his life was the publication of the children's magazine 'Sandesh' in 1913. His major contributions were varied - Puranic tales, fairytales, legends, short stories, poems, songs, articles on science, history, discoveries and inventions, biographies, travelogues and riddles, apart from his editing, illustrations and printing which were the best in contemporary India. His son Sukumar was then in England for technical training in printing technology and he was able to hand over the first issue of 'Sandesh' to Rabindranath. He highly appreciated that and made a commitment to write for 'Sandesh' but it did not materialise during Upendrakisor's lifetime. Upendrakisor involved practically the whole Ray family in the running of 'Sandesh' and it became the ideal children's magazine in its content and presentation, combining education and entertainment, with the aim of 'building the Nation of the future'. Simultaneously, he continued to serve the Sadharan Brahma Samaj, teaching Brahmasangeet at the Sunday school and writing several Brahmasangeets himself. Even today, the

Maghotsava at the Samaj starts with his 'Jago Purabasi' and closes with his friend Rabindranath's 'Padaprante Rakho Sevakey'. Unfortunately, the happy days were numbered and Upendrakisor passed away on December 20, 1915 after suffering acutely from Diabetes. His quiet departure was noted in cultural circles.

Upendrakisor's eldest son Sukumar (1887-1923), and, indeed, all his children wrote in the 'Sandesh', but Sukumar took the lead. Naturally, he took over the editorship and it was a resounding success. Satyajit had noted that, almost overnight, the magazine was transformed from a children's magazine to one for teenagers. Sukumar wrote prolifically, sometimes contributing six or seven pieces to a single issue - translations, short stories, poems, plays, articles on history, geography, expeditions and science, interesting news features and riddles - his contributions spanned the entire gamut of interests that appealed to children and teenagers. He illustrated his own pieces and the entire magazine, following in the footsteps of his father. He edited the magazine for nearly eight years and held it together by his superhuman efforts. During these eight years, he wrote over 300 pieces for 'Sandesh'. He gathered around him a dedicated band of authors but the cap in his feather was to get two classic poems from Rabindranath- 'Burhi' (1921) and 'Samayhara' (1923). They were artistically illustrated by Sukumar and his elder sister Sukhalata. His illustrations, layout and printing added a new dimension to the magazine.

Long before this, Sukumar had become close to Rabindranath. He was not merely the leader of the children of the family and the neighborhood, displaying his curiosity and powers of improvisation that led him to improvise new games, think up stories and found the 'Nonsense Club' for family and friends where he wrote poems, staged plays and brought out a magazine of whimsy named 'Sarhey Batrish Bhaja'. He was also an outstanding student. Like his father before him, he studied in Presidency College and came out successfully with double honours in Physics and Chemistry. He was, however, not destined for an academic career and started taking interest in photography and printing to assist



Figure 2. Ray's retrospective drawing of the house built by Upendrakisor where Satyajit was born. Courtesy: The World of Satyajit Ray by Bidyut Sarkar.



Figure 3. Present looks of the house built by Satyajit Ray's grandfather Upendra Kishor Raychoudhury in 1914. Photo : Chayan Biswas, ISNA. (For more details see Figure 4.)

his father. He was involved in the Student's Weekly Service of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj and ultimately founded the 'Chhatra Samaj' in 1910, also becoming a member of the Governing Body of the Samaj. At his request, Rabindranath delivered two important speeches at the Sadharan Brahma Samaj entitled 'Brahmo Samajer Sarthakata' and 'Atmaparichay'. He also accompanied Rabindranath to Santiniketan for the first time in 1911 and participated in Rabindranath's own play 'Gorhay Galad', apart from staging one of his nonsense plays. Over 1910-11, two of his articles were printed in the leading Bengali liberal magazine *Prabasi*. A photograph of Rabindranath taken by Sukumar was printed in *Prabasi* (1911) and was highly acclaimed.

However, Sukumar's life took a turn during the year 1911 when he was awarded the Guruprasanna Ghosh scholarship to study printing technology in Britain for two years.

He sailed for England in October, 1911 after being relieved of his responsibilities as Assistant Secretary of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj. In England, he took training in London County School of Photography and Lithography and the Manchester Municipal School of Technology. Three of his articles were published in Pearson's Pictorial Annual. He was able to visit museums, art galleries and sports events, also participating in social activities which enabled him to meet people like Fox Strangways, Rothenstein, Havell, Pearson and Cranmer Byng, among others. He translated several of Rabindranath's poems, apart from writing an article 'The Spirit of Rabindranath', which was published by the East and West Society. By the middle of 1912, Rabindranath also visited England and spent a long period there in two stretches. This brought Sukumar in closer contact with him and his letters home "sprinkled with news of Tagore". A single group photograph of Sukumar and some Indian students with the poet and Rothenstein bears testimony to their interactions. Before he returned to India, Sukumar became a fellow of the Royal Photographic Society and also stood first in his class at Manchester. By end-September, 1913, he returned to Calcutta with Rabindranath's party. On return, Sukumar made his maiden contribution to 'Sandesh'. He married Suprabha Devi in December, 1913 and Rabindranath attended the ceremony. Suprabha was a trained Rabindrasangeet singer and the poet was very fond of her.

After marriage, the family shifted to Upendrakisor's new house at 100, Garpar Road, which was specially designed for a large family and also took care of the space requirements of 'Sandesh' and U.Ray & Sons. This was the beginning of the most productive decade in his

creative life, though he lost his father after two years. In 1915, Sukumar set up the Monday Club with a group of friends. Kamakshi Prasad Chattopadhyay observed "He established a literary society named Monday Club and I don't know if he was taking a dig at Sunday school when he named it. Many wellknown people were members". In fact, the members included such distinguished people as Satyendra Nath Datta, Atul Prasad Sen, Prasanta Mahalanobis, Suniti Chattopadhyay, Nirmal Siddhanta and many others. Sukumar was the life and soul of the club and added a touch of whimsy to its programmes, though many serious issues were discussed. Many of the members were devoted to Rabindranath and considerable time was devoted to discussing Rabindranath's works, reading his plays and poems and rendering his songs. The poet was given two receptions in the club in 1917 and 1918. The club's anthem 'Amader Monda Sammelan' by Satyen Datta was an adaptation of Rabindranath's 'Amader Santiniketan'. Sukumar and Suprabha visited Santiniketan quite often and was always received very cordially by the poet. He was also entrusted with setting up the press at Santiniketan. Unfortunately, the activities of the club ended in 1919 after some members left Calcutta and some others passed away. Sukumar remained active in the Sadharan Brahma Samaj and also composed a couple of Brahmasangeets. From 1918, Sukumar and his friends brought up the proposal of making Rabindranath an honorary member of the Samaj but, though many of the younger members and some senior members were totally in favour, the conservative section of the senior members kept on blocking the proposal. Ultimately, Prasanta Mahalanobis and Sukumar brought out a booklet entitled *Keno Rabindranathke Chai* (1921) and this turned the tide. The proposal was carried in a special general meeting by 496 votes to 232.

1921 was a crucial year for Sukumar. Apart from the victory in the campaign for Rabindranath, his only child Satyajit was born on the 2nd May. The press and the company were doing well and he was full of ideas. No one anticipated the descending dark clouds but a visit to the zamindari estates in Mymensingh probably infected him with the fatal kalazar, for which there was no approved course of treatment. Gradually, he became almost bedridden. He kept on writing and doing some editorial work but some months went by without any contribution from him. The family went on 'change' several times, including a last visit to his beloved Santiniketan. At his request, Rabindranath visited him a couple of times and sang specially at his request. Nothing was of any avail and Sukumar passed away quietly in the morning of the 20th September at the age of 36. Even in his death-bed,

he had completed the final editing and layout of his classic *Abol Tabol*, cocking a snook at death in his last poem, though the book ultimately came out 9 days too late. He had also edited the final version of his *Hajabarala* which was to come out a year later, but some other sketches and drafts of papers remained incomplete.

Rabindranath recalled his 'young friend' in a memorial meeting in Santiniketan and also wrote to Suprabha Devi expressing his grief. He also presided over a memorial meeting at the Sadharan Brahma Samaj on the 29th September evening. Much later, in 1940, at the request of Suprabha Devi, he wrote a preface to Sukumar's *Pagla Dashu*, stressing Sukumar's unique role in propagating nonsense literature in Bengali.

The worst, however, was yet to come. Sukumar's second brother Subinoy had to take over as editor. He was talented but with not much experience and the parent company (U. Ray & Sons) was in debt. He ran the magazine for three years and got together a band of writers. Rabindranath's support continued and he contributed three poems and part of his whimsical sketch 'They' over 1930-1933 but, by then, Subinoy was a paid employee of the new owners because suddenly, the roof fell down on the hapless family without any warning. Even with a fresh loan mortgaging the house, the press and the remaining land in Mymensing, the loan could not be settled and the creditors foreclosed. U. Ray & Sons had to declare bankruptcy. The house, all the objects, the press and the business were auctioned and sold at such low prices that it smacked of connivance. Sukumar's widow Suprabha had to face the world alone with her son Satyajit. Fortunately, her brother Prasanta Kumar Das came forward and accommodated them in his house at Bhowanipore. Suprabha, however, was not totally cowed down by the circumstances, but decided to bring up her son on the strength of her job at Vidyasagar Bani Bhavan and a small stipend for the education of her minor son. Marie Seton had observed that such an arrangement was "almost unknown as a setting for the life and work of most internationally known artists in the West". She concluded "Not only is Ray's talent inherited, but the independent cast of his mind and the character of his moral outlook are a reflection of a family type".

Satyajit Ray (1921-1992) started a new life in completely different circumstances in 1926. He had not seen his grandfather Upendrakisor who had passed away six years before his birth and his memory of his father and the Garpar house was the faintest. Yet he mentioned in an interview in the 'Desh' magazine "I am a believer in

genes. I believe in genes because I never met my grandfather. When we left Garpar and started living in Bhowanipore, I grew up in an atmosphere which could not be described as creative because my uncle's immediate family had no music composer or poet or storywriter. They were all sincere middle class householders. I did not have any exposure to any creative environment in the early part of my life. Had my father remained alive for another ten, fifteen or twenty years and I had grown up in close contact with him, my talents could have flowered much earlier. I could have shown my creativity a little earlier. But that was not possible. That happened much later, even after my college life. Really, my creativity flowered a bit only after my years at Santiniketan....Of course, my genes were inherited from my mother's side also. And the two genetic streams combined and perhaps gave me a special impetus"(translation mine). Satyajit and his mother were, of course, welcomed very warmly by his Sonamama (Prasanta Kumar Das) and his wife Binamamima. He observed "I do not think that at that age, one feels sad for a shift from a comfortable situation to an ordinary one". He also noted "I did not know why U Ray & Sons closed down so soon after Sandesh closed.....I have seen mother from so close, but I didn't realise then what she did for me. Now, when I think about it, it appears to be incredible. Her life was one long struggle. Our business folded down, we had to leave the ancestral house, we were left almost penniless. My uncle gave us shelter. Ma met Lady Abala Bose and got a job at Vidyasagar Bani Bhavan. She knew sewing and embroidery. She learnt clay modelling, painting and leather work. After feeding me, she went to work and she worked from early morning till night. I learnt how to work 18 hours out of 24, when necessary, only from her. "

Satyajit's childhood has been described in his own words in his *Jakhan Chhoto Chhilam* (1982). His uncle Sonamama was deeply interested in indoor games and he was drawn to these quite naturally. His mother's gifts of 'Romance of Famous Lives' and 'Book of Knowledge' provided a window to the outside world. It was clear from an early age that he was a natural artist. Now music became a serious interest, particularly after he was gifted a gramophone. He got interested in stamp collection, stereoscopes, magic lantern shows, carnivals, circus and magic shows. In addition, movies proved to be a serious interest gradually. His mother took him on vacations to interesting places - Lucknow, Darjeeling, Sunderbans, Hazaribagh and various other places. He also went to Santiniketan a couple of times and vividly remembered his interactions with Nandalal Basu and his rambles in the

Khowai. His mother took him to meet Rabindranath and he wrote a small poem in his autograph book. This was, of course, a valuable addition to his collection and he recalled later with a tinge of regret that this poem, which was his own once, became everyone's property after it was published. Nevertheless, he was not enthused to join Santiniketan.

By 1930, he joined Ballygunge Government High School, which was near their home. He was a quiet boy, good at studies, but usually not among the toppers. The school library and extra-curricular activities provided additional avenues of interest. He also grew seriously interested in photography and won an award from 'Boys' Own Paper' (1936), like his father before him.

He was known in school as a good artist and interested in Western Classical music. His school friend Anil Sinha had a rich collection of Western music records which helped him immensely. In a couple of years, his mother's stepbrother passed away and his wife and two daughters also took shelter in the house of his Sonamama and one of the daughters Bijoya was a trained performer in Western classical music. This was a bond between the two of them and helped him to go deep into the heart of Western music to the extent that he was able to identify the famous symphonies and concertos of Beethoven, Brahms, Schubert and the likes of them almost instantly. However, he did not draw away from Rabindrasangeet. Apart from his grandfather, father and mother, Atulprasad was his uncle, Kanak Biswas, Sahana Devi and Malati Ghoshal were aunts. He has gone on record "Music was in my blood. I grew up in an atmosphere of Brahmasangeet and Tagore songs. Lastly at Santiniketan, I came across Professor Alex Aronson and, with his guidance gained mastery over Western classical music" .

By 1934, his Sonamama shifted house from Bakulbagan road to Beltala road. Satyajit made some new friends but life went on as usual. By 1936, Sonamama built a new three-storied house on Rashbehari Avenue, incidentally, situated just next to Satyajit's aunt Punyalata's house, where Sandesh office has been located for many years. In 1936, he passed the Matriculation examination doing reasonably well and joined the Presidency College like his father and grandfather before him. He did not exactly set the venerable college on fire, though he did reasonably well in ISc. He joined the BA course in Economics honours on the advice of his father's friend Prasanta Mahalanobis. He admitted that he did not like economics but scraped through his courses. However, the

college days helped him to read a lot more, collect used books, cultivate his interest in Western music and attend programmes in Calcutta Symphony Orchestra. Above all, he started taking serious interest in movies, particularly musicals - taking notes, reading analytical books on movies and rating them.

In 1940, after graduation, he did something new - he designed the cover of Sukumar's book 'Pagla Dashu'. With his mother, he ran into Rabindranath at a wedding and he asked Suprabha to send him to Santiniketan. This was very close to Suprabha's heart but Satyajit was not keen - he wanted to do commercial art, not fine art the way it was done at Kala Bhavana. But, at his mother's insistence, he agreed. His biggest gains at Santiniketan in two years were his friendship with a group that included Dinakar Kaushik, Prithwis Neogi and Muthuswami, interactions with Nandalal, Binodebehari and Ramkinkar and his attraction for rural scenes. His calligraphy improved in bounds and he also learnt to appreciate the world of Oriental Art. He met Rabindranath on arrival, but the poet was busy and not keeping well. In 1941, the poet made his last journey to Calcutta. When the final news came, Satyajit and Dinakar Kaushik boarded a train and accompanied the poet on his last journey. After that, he felt that a tie had snapped. Nevertheless, he stayed another year and returned to Calcutta when the Japanese bombing started in earnest. Incidentally, something rare happened in 1942 - for the first time, the Bengali New Year's programme did not include a Tagore play or dance-drama, instead, Sukumar Ray's 'Hajabarala' was staged, directed by Satyajit. This was the only play he had ever directed.

On return, he was looking for a job in creative advertising. Fortunately, he met Dilip Kumar Gupta, better known as DK, who became a lifelong friend, and was selected as a Junior Visualiser Artist of DJ Keymer at a gross salary of Rs 80 per month. He was apprenticed to Annada Munshi for a while and started designing advertisements some of which had stood the test of time. However, by 1948, he was a Joint Art Director of the company, though at one-third the salary of the other Joint Art Director, an Englishman. His chief gain was a link with the publishing world. Dilip Gupta opened his publishing house Signet Press and their triumphant journey started with Sukumar and Upendrakisar, with Satyajit as cover designer and book illustrator. This was a new journey for him and he illustrated many books for them. He had also done some illustrations for 'Mouchak' and 'Rangmashal'.

From 1944, he started practising film scripts. By 1946, he came back to Tagore when he wrote the complete script

for *Gharey Baire*, which was to be directed by his friend Harisadhan Dasgupta.

Unfortunately, the project fell through and he was to wait 38 years to do the film (with a different script). In 1947, he set up the Calcutta Film Society with his friends. By 1948, he shifted to a hired accommodation at Lake Avenue with his mother Suprabha. He got married to Bijoya in the same year, after overcoming the reservations of his mother. In 1950, he saw Jean Renoir at work on his 'The River' closely and wrote an article in a British journal on this. He was promoted as Art Director of DJ Keymer and he also visited England and Europe for over six months, becoming a member of the London Film Club and viewing 99 films in that period. This was of enormous use to him. On the way back, he started work on the film script of 'Pather Panchali'.

The 1950's saw Satyajit get seriously involved in film-making, apart from his work at DJ Keymer. He was in considerable difficulty in his first film *Pather Panchali* (1955), which could be completed only with the assistance of West Bengal Government. After *Pather Panchali* won a dozen national and international awards, things became a little easier and he came up successively with *Aparajito*, *Paras Pathar*, *Jalsaghar*, *Apur Sansar* and *Devi*. During this period, Rabindranath took a back seat but he had used rabindrasangeet tunes as background music in *Apur Sansar* and *Devi*. But 1960 saw the sad demise of his mother Suprabha who was devoted to Rabindranath and was deeply desirous of reviving *Sandesh*, the children's magazine to which her husband and father in law were so devoted. She did not see this come into fruition, but 1961 was almost there.

1961 was a remarkable year for Satyajit. May saw the Tagore Centenary being observed throughout the country. On the 5th May, Satyajit's *Tin Kanya* based on three Tagore short stories *Postmaster*, *Manihara* and *Samapti* was released and this was accompanied by his first ever documentary *Rabindranath*, lasting 54 minutes. *Tin Kanya* (though it travelled abroad as 'Two Daughters') won several international awards while *Rabindranath* won the President's Gold Medal and the 'Golden Seal' award for the best documentary at Locarno film festival. Satyajit's handling of background music in general and use of rabindrasangeet in particular has attracted attention all along but the story started here. *Manihara* had the incomparable 'Bajey Karuna Surey' sung in the melodious voice of Amiya Tagore, while *Rabindranath* had nine Rabindranath songs - seven in part and two in full. It may

also be noted that, after 1961, he took over as music director of his own films. Also, in 1961, he was entrusted with designing the Rabindra-centenary postage stamp and, again, the design was highly acclaimed the world over. Incidentally, from the 1950's, Satyajit had sketched Rabindranath at least 30 times and many of them were printed in *Pratikriti* (1992). Many of his serious thoughts on rabindrasangeet are contained in an article and an interview which were compiled in *Bishoy Rabindrasangee'* (2003). In his films, he came back to Rabindranath in *Charulata* (1964) and *Gharey Baire* (1984). He continued to use rabindrasangeet in his films in a masterly way in *Kanchanjangha* (1962), *Mahanagar* (1963), *Charulata* (1964), *Kapurush o Mahapurush* (1965), *Aranyer Dinratri* (1970), *Jana Aranya* (1975), *Ghare Baire* (1984), *Ganashatru* (1989), *Shakha Prashakha* (1990) and *Agantuk* (1991). Other films deserving special mention include *Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne* (1969) based on his grandfather's story, *Hirak Rajar Deshey* (1980) on his own story based on his grandfather's characters Goopy and Bagha, *Sonar Kella* (1974) and *Joy Baba Felunath* (1978) based on his own stories, and the documentary film *Sukumar Ray* (1987) on his father's birth centenary when he was not keeping well.

1961 also saw the flowering of a dream - in May, *Sandesh* came out again under the joint editorship of Satyajit Ray and Subhas Mukhopadhyay. It created quite a stir, but unfortunately, his mother was not able to see this dream come into fruition. Apart from the established authors of the period, 'Sandesh' reprinted Upendrakisor, Sukumar and Subinoy for the new generation. Mohanlal Gangopadhyay, Rathindranath Tagore, Kshitish Roy and Alokendra Nath Tagore brought back the flavour of the Tagores during Rabindra centenary. Satyajit had never written for children before. Now he started with translations (or transliterations) of Lear and Carroll and moved on to science fiction and fantasy stories. After the appearance of his detective Feluda, he became all the more popular among the youngsters. His Feluda and Professor Shanku stories, as well as other stories were all published in book form. He had once casually said that royalty on his books bring him more money than all his films. Running *Sandesh* on a commercial basis as a company, however, did not work out. By 1963, Subhas Mukhopadhyay left as Joint Editor, the office at Dharmatollah Street was given up, the office moved to 172/3 Rashbehari Avenue where it continues to this day, *Sandesh* became the first magazine to be run by a cooperative of authors and artists named 'Sukumar Sahitya Samabaya Samiti', Lila Majumdar joined as co-editor in 1963, to be joined by Nalini Das after a

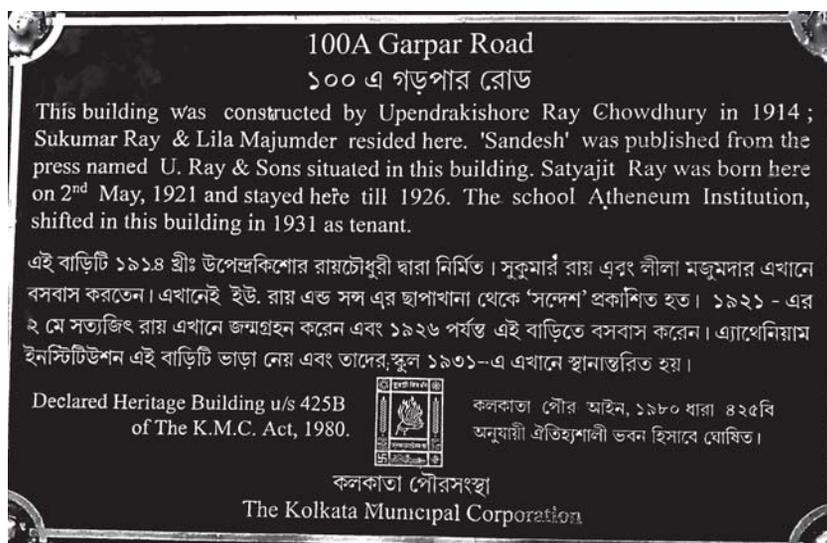


Figure 4. The plaque established by The Kolkata Municipal Corporation depicting a brief history of the present building. Photo by Chayan Biswas, ISNA

couple of years and this triumvirate carried the *Sandesh* brand forward for nearly 30 years.

Satyajit earned a series of national and international honours - various awards at Film Festivals, President's Award for best photograph (1957), Sangeet Natak Akademi award (1959), the Padma Awards from Padmasree (1959) to Padmabhushan (1965) and Bharatratna (1992), Magsaysay Award (1967), honorary doctorate degrees from many universities including Oxford and Calcutta Universities, Sahitya Akademi award for children's literature (1967), Ananda Puraskar (1971), international award for Ray Roman typography, Vidyasagar award (1982), Dadasaheb Phalke Award (1985), French Legion of Honour (1987) ending with the Academy Award for Lifetime Achievement (1992). About the Academy Award, his comment was "But this I never expected. This comes as a sort of climax to my career. Because, for a film-maker, an Oscar is like a Nobel Prize".

However, the 1980's were unhappy ones for him and his family - he suffered two cardiac attacks in 1983 and 1984. Even open heart surgery at the world's best facilities in the United States could not cure him fully and he could direct only three films in the last seven years of his life. Even when seriously ill, he kept on writing and doing some editing work. However, several of his Feluda and Professor Shanku stories were left incomplete and several of his film scripts and TV serials were ultimately given final shape by his son Sandip, who had been assisting his father for a few years. His last planned films 'Uttaran' and 'Target' had to be completed by Sandip.

After suffering intensely for nearly two months, Satyajit passed away on the 23rd April, 1992 just a few days short of reaching 71. Thus ended the saga of the Ray family spanning three generations, combining love of literature, art, music and culture. Of course, the story is still incomplete, for his son Sandip and grandson Souradeep are carrying on the family traditions - photography, film, music and the family magazine Sandesh which is approaching its 60th anniversary since its remarkable resurrection by Satyajit. □

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