



Afsana Mimi and Rowshan Jamil in a sequence from *Chitra Nadir Pare*



Protibha in a somber sequence in *Chitra Nadir Pare*

## Chitra Nadir Pare: A Film to Remember

by Buddhadeb Dasgupta

IT has become few months since I was in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Both the families of my parents are originally from that part of Bengal. After my mother's marriage she moved to a lonely railway station named Anara, a place close to Bengal-Bihar border where my father was first posted. A section of my father's family moved to this part of Bengal long before Partition for my father's medical education. As a kid I last visited Dhaka at my grandmother's house when I was only seven or eight years old and that was in 1955. She and her family tried their best to stick to their country, their land, their house, friends, trees, rivers, roads and to the sky above. But one day they had to give up. Finally they crossed the border sometime in 1956 and came to settle down in an unknown city named Calcutta. I still remember my grandmother whispering in my ears the news that this is purely a temporary ar-

The film is about a strange journey of people from their roots to a place where they never wanted to belong. A painful and emotionally shattering journey of those who were forced to make that from both ends of a newly partitioned country. A journey with nightmare, with fear, with faithless situations and with stains of blood all over the path. Tanvir's script has all the strength to capture these along with also other hidden elements related to this journey with a language of cinema. The dialogue is meaningful. The use of silence in between is remarkable. The cinematography is good but could have been better. Mahadeb Shi's editing is brilliant and Syed Sabab Ali Arzoo's music travels down memory lane to those tunes making the audience wistful and lonely.

angement and very soon she and her family would be going back to their very own place at Dhaka. She believed this till a week before she died. Many others like her believed the same.

All these came back to my mind when I saw Tanvir Mokammel's second feature film *Chitra Nadir Pare* (*Quiet Flows the River Chitra*) at Dhaka sometime during April this year. When the film was on I found a strange emotion coming out of the screen overpow-

ering my whole being. Ever since then I kept remembering the film as a very honest and sincere representation of a part of history that affected many people as a physician. I was born there. I think I just missed Dhaka as my birthplace as my mother left her parental house just a couple of weeks before I was born to join my father who surely was feeling lonely without her. Even now after crossing fifty I think my father deprived me of the happiness of being born at Dhaka.

ple who once lived happily in this part of Bengal of undivided India. Thematically this film might be referred to during discussions of such unforgettable films like *Chhinnamul* by Nemai Ghosh, *Garam Hava* by Sathyu, *Subarnarekha* and *Meghe Dhaka Tara* by great Ritwik Ghatak.

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Mahadeb Shi's editing is brilliant and Syed Sabab Ali Arzoo's music travels down memory lane to those tunes making the audience wistful and lonely. Every artist attempts to perform the best but Afsana Mimi stands out brilliantly. A genuineness always lights up her face in the sequences of love, dejection, anguish and helplessness experienced by the character. In recent years I have not seen such an expressive face like her in Bengali films made either in Dhaka or in Calcutta. I wish I could get her at least in one of my future projects.

I have been watching the films made in Bangladesh with great care and *Chitra Nadir Pare* is one of those very few that will keep on lingering in my memory. The film does not make you experience a great cinematic excellence but it does have a rare uniqueness to whisper some dangerous truths to us that force us to go for introspection.

## art Efforts in France to Return Works of Art Plundered by the Nazis

by Claudine Canetti

DURING this conference, France reasserted her will to fully elucidate the plundering of which members of the Jewish community in France were victims between 1940 and 1944, both on account of the Nazi occupation and owing to the Vichy régime, and the compensation that they have the right to expect. In 1997, a commission headed by Mr Jean Matteoli, chairman of the French Economic and Social Council, was given the task, by the French government, of carrying out a wide-scale investigation into the plundering and drawing up an inventory of the goods held by French institutions or public authorities.

45,441 works of art, which were pillaged and recovered by France from Germany after the end of the war, were restored to their owners or rightful beneficiaries, between 1946 and 1949, thanks to investigations carried out by the Artistic Recovery Commission put in charge of this tremendous task. However, over the last few years, there has been a lot of discussion over 2,058 works of art (including 1,029 paintings) put into the care of French national museums in 1949, as this commission and the French Museums Department (Direction des Musées de France), closely involved in this work, had been unable to trace their origin or find their owners. These works, duly inventoried under the general designation of "Musées Nationaux Récupération" (MNR) (recovery by French national museums), were exhibited in Compiègne in the Paris area from 1950 to 1954, without anybody claiming them. So they were shared out among national and regional museums considered as being held in trust but never being integrated into the national collections so as to make it permanently possible for claims to be made by rightful beneficiaries. Between 1951 and 1957, a further thirty of them were restored. A book by the Puerto Rican journalist Hector Feli-

A new step has recently been taken in France to help restore the works of art stolen by the Nazis from victims of the Holocaust. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has published a catalogue of works which have not been restored from the famous collection of the great art lover Alphonse Schloss, seized in France in 1943. The circulation all over the world and on the Internet of this catalogue, which is the first ever to have been drawn up, comes at a time when an international conference, held in Washington, recently examined the painful problem of the plundering of Jewish possessions during the Second World War, and, especially, the pillaging of works of art.

ciano, "The Disappeared Museum", which reproached France for not having made enough effort to find the legitimate owners of the MNR, led the French Museums Department to hold an international conference in Paris, in November 1996, on the theme of "Pillaging and Restoring" and then, in April 1997, further exhibitions of the works in question were organised at the Louvre, at the Orsay Museum, at Versailles, in Sèvres and for art from the 20th century, at the Georges Pompidou Centre. Recently, several works (by Picasso, Albert Glerizes, Fougita, Utrillo and Picabia) were restored to the despoiled families.

All the discussions around this problem have brought to light the complexity of the matter of restoring the works, in particular owing to the flourishing activity of the art market in France under the Occupation which enabled the Germans to buy many works of art coming either from the stocks of dealers or from private collectors. Many of these works of art that had been bought and which were repatriated into France after the war, have not been claimed, hence the difficulty of tracing their "pedigree". According to the French Museums Department, this seems to be the case for the majority of the MNR works.

On the occasion of these discussions, a warm tribute was paid to those who, during the Occupation, had attempted to save not only the treasures of French museums, but also those in private collections, hidden in castles in the provinces or fictitiously "acquired" by



Restoration of Painting by Fougita by French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine

museums which later returned them to their owners. Two names recurred most often in this homage, those of Jacques Jaujard, at the time, head of French National Museums, and Rose Valland, a veritable member of the French art Resistance, posted at the Jeu de Paume museum, requisitioned by the Germans and which was used as a "sorting station" for plundered works, intended, for instance, for Goering's collections or the Linz museum created by Hitler. For four years, Rose Valland gathered information on the origin of the pillaged collections and on their places of destination, copying out the despatching slips and recovering carbon paper in waste paper baskets. Taking enormous risks and regularly returning to the museum when she had been banned access several times, she, in a way, drew up an inventory of the collections transiting through the Jeu de Paume museum, which considerably facilitated their recovery after the war.

Among the collections belonging to Jewish families, there was that of Alphonse Schloss, known all over the world, mainly made up of Flemish and Dutch paintings. The collection was bequeathed to his children who hid it in a castle in the provinces in 1939, but it was found, in 1943, by the Germans who had been ordered to look for it in order to send it to the Linz museum. The Louvre succeeded in pre-empting 49 of the 333 pictures listed, which it returned in 1945. Most of the collection was sent to the Jeu de Paume and thence to the Munich museum. 171 of these works have not been restored, but some of them, recognised in foreign museums or in sales, have led to court cases or to requests to have them back. The purpose of the publication by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the catalogue of these works is to help heirs in their search, but also to prevent any possible buyers from finding themselves in the position of holding stolen goods.