



RESTORATION OF APU'S TRILOGY

APURBA JAHANGIR



Famous director Akira Kurosawa once said, "To live without seeing the films of the Indian director Satyajit Ray, means existing in the world without seeing the sun or the moon". In 1955, Satyajit Ray debuted as a director with his adaptation of the Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay's eminent novel 'Pather Panchali' which is the same name as Ray's film. After the release and enormous success of Pather Panchali, Ray as a sequel to Apu's voyage directed Aparajito and Apur Sansar. Together, the three films made a series called the 'Apu Trilogy'.

On May 3, 1955 with help of curator Monroe Wheeler, the film had its world premiere at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. The first premier back in 1955 was without subtitles as Ray couldn't add it in on time. The film still was a gangbuster which led to a showing at Cannes, where Ray won an award for Best Human Document, and it was the first Indian film to make a major impact on the art house circuit.

In 2015, Pather Panchali celebrated its 60 years of release. To celebrate its anniversary, JANUS Film collaborating with Criterion Collection as a tribute to Satyajit Ray restored the film and released the trilogy in 4k resolution on May 4, 2015, in the same Modern Art Museum.

Yet this was much more than a typical re-mastering.

Much like the life of Ray's protagonist, the restoration process had its own ups and downs. For decades a lot of Ray's work was mostly seen on clumsy prints. After he was given an honorary lifetime achievement award at the 1992 Oscars, a decision was made to restore the films. The negatives were sent to a lab in London, but soon tragedy occurred. A fire caused all the

original negatives to burn and the trilogy left to nothing but chunks of charred film. There never was a decent version of the films let alone Blue-Ray. But then, Peter Becker, CEO of the Criterion Collection, said in the documentary regarding the restoration, "Sometimes not throwing something away is the most heroic thing you can do."

In the past, this was truly impossible to do. But now technology has advanced enough to restore the film and give it a whole new dimension. The films were in very poor condition and would crumble in the can if shaken too hard. Like Apu's search for a job in Apur Sansar, the initial

approach towards the restoration was a complete disappointment. A lot of film labs rejected this project as nobody wanted to risk being the ones to destroy this masterpiece. Finally one lab in Bologna, Italy, agreed to take a chance on the burnt negatives.

Months and months of dedication and hard work were put to the process. From cutting frame by frame from the damaged negatives, everything was done by hand. A lot of scratches and spots caused by the plastic and the fire had to be removed for the 4k conversion.

As a result of the hard work put in by Janus and Criterion Collection, we

received the ultimate experience of the films, the way Ray wanted to portray them. The shot of Apu and Durga where they encounter a train for the first time beside the Kans Grass (kaash phool) fields is considered one of the most vital shots in the history of cinema. This frame alone can show how Ray put in every thought towards his visual detail.

The restoration did exact justice to shots like this and now the audience can appreciate it even better. It is said that this restoration takes Satyajit Ray's Apu Trilogy to a whole new visual experience. Every detail is now shown and can give one the proper Ray experience. ■

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MAD GENIUS

SHAHABUDDIN AHMED
September 11, 1950

Internationally renowned Bangladeshi artist Shahabuddin Ahmed's works have travelled across the globe including the Museum Olympic Laussane, Switzerland and Bourn-EnBrasse Museum in France. He has been bestowed with "Chevalier De L'ordre Des Arts Et Des Lettres" (Knight in the Order of Fine Arts and Humanities), France's highest civilian title for his contribution to Art in France and all around the world by the Ministry for Cultural Affairs and Communication of France. Being a proud freedom fighter, the spirit of the Liberation War has always been in the core of his paintings.

“ I never felt so scared in my life. Never felt so helpless. I saw Mumbai attacks on television. This attack was strikingly similar, and this time I was in it. Who can do such malicious things! Are they human? I am still dazed in shock. I couldn't sleep the whole night. It's hard to talk now. But I will sleep, I am mentally shocked.”

(Shahabuddin shared his experience after Paris attack in a writeup published on Anandabazar Patrika)

Initially I was my own model. I used to paint my body on the mirror. However, the shape of figure was not suitable for my paintings, since my works represent courage and victory. Then I used to imagine the muscular figure of the athletes for my models.

I'm always fascinated by Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin. In fact, I'm inspired by his paintings and used to follow his works at the initial stage of my career. But, my stay in Europe has a great influence on me. Blending my origin and experience in Europe, I've developed my own style, which is different from the other artists in France. Watching my painting, at a glance, anybody can say that the artist is not of French origin. ”

STAR DIARY

LOVE GONE IN VAIN

I thought I would celebrate Valentine's Day by participating at the 'Clean-up Dhaka' event organised by Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC). What could be a better way to celebrate the day of love than express my love for my city? However, the scene that greeted me when I went to the designated venue was disheartening! The place was crowded and littered to the tilt. Dirty, smelly hay was stacked in one corner while plastic cups and wrappers were carelessly strewn around the place. I fail to understand what love we've shown to our city through such a 'dirty' gesture? While returning home, I realised that in our country it's usually words that are bigger than actions.

Shumi Ahmed
Dhanmandi, Dhaka



ADDED PRESSURE

My parents have been urging me to start some extra-curricular activities alongside my studies. I am a student of class 9, and will be giving my O-levels in a couple of years. So the pressure of studies is already overwhelming. Moreover, I have to attend coaching classes in the evening, and often play football with my friends on weekends, as that's my only respite after a whole week of hard work. Now, my parents want me to join the debate or music club so that it could "enhance" my university applications. I know that I won't be able to handle another activity but who will explain that to my parents? I wish parents and teachers would understand that there is only so much that we students can do.

Arif Mirza
Mirpur, Dhaka